DEVELOPING THE **HEAD, HEART & HAND** HOLISTICALLY TOWARDS ACHIEVING **THE MAQĀṢID OF THE SHARĪ'AH:** AN UNDERGRADUATE PERSPECTIVE

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Developing the Head, Heart and Hand Holistically Towards Achieving the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah: An Undergraduate Perspective

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Abstract

The head-heart-hand tripartite is often used to depict holistic education, not focusing only on academic merits of the 'head' and technical skills of the 'hand', but also character-building, spiritual enlightenment, and emotional resilience of the 'heart'. Unfortunately, the development of the spiritual heart is often neglected, especially in higher education where most of the learning assessments pertain to the critical heads and skilful hands. This paper argues for that the balanced development of the head, heart, and hand. In particular, the purification of the spiritual heart is emphasised to heighten moral and God-consciousness for better decision-making. Additionally, such holistic development is needed to ensure the achievement of the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah collectively, i.e., the preservation and promotion of Faith, Life, Intellect, Progeny, and Wealth. By setting the head-heart-hand tripartite with the *Maqāṣid*, a frame of reference is constructed as an evaluative tool to examine individual holistic development. This framework is then used to examine the reported developmental experiences of undergraduate students in the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, giving particular attention to the issues and challenges faced in light of the five *Maqāṣid*. The preliminary findings signalled challenges faced in preserving and promoting Life, Intellect, and Progeny.

Keywords: spiritual heart, holistic development, Imam al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah, undergraduate

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The Islamic civilisation has seen many Muslim scholars contributing to its development over the centuries. Some of these widespread contributions, ranging from medicine and architecture to theology and juristic, are still influential today! Such far-reaching contribution can be attributed to their holistic education system, not necessarily training their critical 'head' (i.e., deductive reasoning, innovating thinking, etc) and skilful 'hand' (i.e., craftsmanship, engineering skills, programming, etc), but also their virtuous 'heart' (i.e. strong belief, clear purpose, empathy, justice, etc).¹ However, what we can find in the current education system is a greater emphasis on developing, and assessing for, the critical 'head,' the rational faculty used for analytical thinking, scientific investigation, and slowed deliberations. Alternatively, the technical 'hand' is emphasised in technical and vocational schools, focusing solely on the acquisition of industry-related skills and capabilities. The 'heart' is arguably underdeveloped, often time misunderstood and neglected. The predominant synonym between the heart and emotion is arguably undermining the heart's true potential. Rather, the heart holds greater potential as the real essence of an individual. This will then open the conversation to additional potentials other than emotions, such as beliefs, values, passion, ethics, virtues, vices, and so on,² unleashing greater potentials of individuals, as well as the collective.

The holistic development of the head, heart, and hand is particularly imperative for young people but is full of challenges. Now with the advent of globalisation, social media, and the digital world, young people especially are susceptible to non-traditional influences arising from greater interactions beyond the localised community and into the wider global citizenry. This thought paper seeks to shed some light on young people's struggles in their personal development within the higher education sector. This paper begins by outlining the framework to assess the holistic and comprehensive development for individuals, based on the head-heart-hand tripartite. Arguably, neglect in any of the three would lead to an unbalanced growth of individuals, leading to various misconduct, violence, corruption, and injustice upon oneself and others. Furthermore, this paper argues that the balanced development of the head, heart, and hand is necessary to achieve the *Maqāṣid* of the Shar'ah collectively, i.e., the preservation and promotion of Faith, Life, Intellect, Progeny, and Wealth. By setting the head-heart-hand tripartite with the *Maqāṣid*, a frame of reference

¹ Alawi Shahrin & Iznan Tarip. "More Critical Thinkers for Islamic Governance. Thought Paper Series No. 2." Journal of Islamic Governance, (2020). islamicgovernance.org/tp2. <https://doi.org/10.53105/tp-2>

² Iznan Tarip & Nur Firdaus bin Abu Bakar. 'Al-Ghazali on the head, heart and hand tripartite, and its organisational implications,' International Journal of 'Umranic Studies, (2020), Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 1-12

is constructed as an evaluative tool to examine the current developmental landscape. Using this framework, a preliminary study on the undergraduate students of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam is conducted to establish a preliminary baseline for their current developmental landscape, particularly within the context of university life.

The Virtuous Heart

The head-heart-hand tripartite is often used for holistic education and can be traced back to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss education reformist.^{1,2} It refers to cognition, affection, and psychomotor respectively, and is used even by contemporary education,³ leadership studies, management, marketing, and so on. However, the heart's greater potential is overlooked due to its common association with the fleeting 'emotion'. In Islam, the spiritual heart is authoritative and valorised. It is defined as the essence of humans "which discerns and comes to know the real nature of things,"⁴ explained Imam al-Ghazālī.⁵ Only if the heart is clean and purified will the individual be able to receive the light of guidance and salvation, witness true reality, and thus, be able to find true happiness in this life and the Hereafter. However, if the spiritual heart is covered, hardened, or dead, the individual will not be able to witness the true reality and will be unable to find true happiness. Unsurprisingly, this definition of the heart is shared, to some extent, by Taoist and Confucian Chinese philosophical traditions, Tibetan and Mahayana Buddhism, and Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophies, and many other ancient world religions. Even the current scientific advancement acknowledged the perceptive faculty of the heart when they coined the terms "heart brain"⁶ and "heart intelligence."

Moral Decision-Maker

There are plenty of roles played by the spiritual heart in the administration of the whole body. Imam al-Ghazālī illustrated that the heart is akin to a king, making decisions to administer his/her kingdom, i.e., body. The heart-king, equipped with free will, is empowered to choose

¹ Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi is a Swiss education reformist. He was born in 1746, and died in 1827.

² Arthur Brühlmeier, *Head, heart and hand: Education in the spirit of Pestalozzi* (Open Book Publishers, 2010).

³ Senka Gazibara, "'Head, Heart and Hands Learning'-A challenge for contemporary education," *The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, no. 1 (2013).

⁴ al-Ghazali, "Aja'ib al-Qalb (Wonders of the Heart)," in *Ihya ulum al-din* (Revival of the Religious Science), ed. Walter James Skellie (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2007), 11.

⁵ Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazālī is a prominent Islamic jurist, theologian and mystic. He was born in Iran in 1058, and died in 1111. He is known as the 'proof of Islam' (Hujjat al-Islām). Among his renowned work is the *Ihyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Science), a 40-volume collection on the principles and practices of Islam.

⁶ Rollin McCraty, *Science of the Heart: Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance (Volume 2) - An overview of research conducted by HeartMath Institute* (2015).

the direction for the bodily kingdom's progress every day. To eat or not to eat, to learn or not to learn, to exercise or not to exercise; these are some of the decisions the heart needs to intuitively make. The heart-king has to be smart and wise in developing the head, hand, and the whole bodily kingdom so that true happiness can be achieved in this world and the Hereafter. He/she needs to become virtuous in life, inculcate good characteristics or virtues in the heart, such as compassion, wisdom, courage, and justice. At the same time, the heart-king has to struggle continuously and rigorously against vices within the heart, such as pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, envy, anger, and sloth, dubbed as the cardinal vices, or the seven deadly sins. These virtues are not only about knowing moral and ethical values, but also manifesting the knowledge into right actions, and turning them into habits. The process of adorning the heart with virtues and good characteristics requires training over many years.

By inculcating virtues and purifying the heart will enhance the moral consciousness of the individual, and assist in making moral decisions in everyday life. It is insufficient to train the critical 'head' into making moral judgements. This is because the critical head can logicise, deliberate, and rationalise, and can only *learn about* morality and ethics. However, knowing on the surface does not necessarily result in the person *becoming* moral and ethical. Good judgements involving morals and ethics are often instantaneous, requiring sharp moral intuitions to arrive at prudent decisions.¹ Only by training the spiritual heart and inculcating moral and ethical values will the individual make moral decisions. The decision-making process of the heart overriding the head is evident in the following *ḥadīth*:

The Prophet ﷺ said to a man who approached him. "You have come to ask about righteousness? Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels at ease and the heart feels tranquil. And wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and causes uneasiness in the breast, even though people have repeatedly given their legal opinion [in its favour]."

Challenges in Developing the Head-Heart-Hand

As mentioned previously, many education systems focused on developing the heads and hands in universities and technical schools. When developing the two, there are specific challenges faced, and support systems are set in place to help learners. However, the

¹ Scott Sonenshein, "The role of construction, intuition and justification in responding to ethical issues at work: the sensemaking-intuition model," *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review* 32, no. 4 (2007).

spiritual heart may not be given much emphasis, resulting in graduates entering the job market with poor character traits. Indeed, the path to purify the heart from spiritual blemishes or vices and inculcate virtues is filled with challenges. Temptations are always presented to the heart, and those with weaker moral consciousness would operate towards following them. However, the purified and virtuous heart with high moral consciousness would not be side-tracked by temptations, and is focused on attaining true happiness and prosperity in this world and the Hereafter. These temptations are illustrated as black stains or 'spiritual blemishes' in the heart, evident in the following *ḥadīth*:

“Hudhaifa (may peace be upon him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ observing: Temptations will be presented to men's hearts as a reed mat is woven stick by stick, and any heart which is impregnated by them will have a black mark put into it, but any heart which rejects them will have a white mark put in it. The result is that there will become two types of hearts: one white like a white stone which will not be harmed by any turmoil or temptation, so long as the heavens and the earth endure; and the other black and dust-coloured like a vessel which is upset, not recognizing what is good or rejecting what is abominable, but being impregnated with passion.”¹

Falling into temptations is also exacerbated because of unclear mind and confusion, caused by the corruption of knowledge.² This situation happens when the heart fails to comprehend the true reality and is also misled by others. The confusion can be attributed to the dark side of globalisation, in which the heart is exposed to alternative worldviews and moral compasses, some of which are in line with the Sharī'ah, e.g., the continuous fight for equity and justice, while others are blatantly antagonistic and hostile to the worldview of Islam, e.g., the empowerment of LGBTQ's over-sexualisation movements and the valorisation of cardinal sins. Ferdinand Mount, a British author of the *Full Circle*, concisely recorded the valorisation of cardinal sins: “covetousness has been rebranded as retail therapy, sloth is downtime, lust is exploring your sexuality, anger is opening up your feelings, vanity is looking good because you're worth it, and gluttony is the religion of foodies.”³ Indeed, some of these

¹ Sahih Muslim, Book 1, *ḥadīth* No. 276

² Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the metaphysics of Islam: an exposition of the fundamental elements of the worldview of Islam*, 2nd ed. ed. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 2001).

³ Ferdinand Mount, *Full circle: How the classical world came back to us* (Simon and Schuster, 2010), 302.

contemporary practices can be categorised as one of the four poisons of the heart: unnecessary talking about issues that are of little benefit, unrestrained glances that stimulate unproductively and/or harmfully, consuming food and drinks excessively, and keeping poor and damaging relationships, including the subscription to false role-models.

Focus on Achieving the Maqāṣid of the Sharī'ah

With confusions, abound affecting young adults especially, the way to true happiness is to ﴿ hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided ﴾,¹ and be focused on achieving the *Maqāṣid* (objectives) of the Sharī'ah. The *Maqāṣid* provides objective measures derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammadﷺ, to which the Ummah should strive towards fulfilling, to achieve true happiness and prosperity. The *Maqāṣid* are the preservation and promotion of Faith, Life, Intellect, Progeny, and Wealth.² Although these objectives should be strived by individuals and the collective, now it can be seen that many nations are setting these *Maqāṣid* as their national objectives. For example, the Sultan of Brunei proclaimed during the National Day celebration in 2018 that the reinforcement of the *Maqāṣid* is a prerequisite and a catalyst to ensure Brunei's prosperity. Indeed, these five *Maqāṣid* covers the fundamental dimensions of everyday life. Interestingly, the *Maqāṣid* is expanding the meaning of 'worship' beyond individual ritual devotion, e.g., the obligatory prayers and fasting during Ramadhan. This is because only one out of the five *Maqāṣid*, i.e., the preservation and promotion of Faith, pertains to the ritual devotion, whilst the remaining four *Maqāṣid* relate to 'worldly' matters: Life, Intellect, Progeny, and Wealth, which are also important. Thus, individuals must develop their heads, hearts, and hands to not only perform ritual devotions, but also to lead their life in all aspects, i.e., ensure physical safety and security, take care of the environment, pursue higher educations and scientific discoveries, build a harmonious family, ensure financial independence, and so on.

Vignettes from Undergraduates

Developing the head, heart and hand are full of challenges, as well, as excitements and opportunities. This can be seen from the responses to the quizzes for the undergraduate students from the Universiti Brunei Darussalam taking the 'MS1501: Islamic Civilisation and the Modern World' breadth module in 2021. The students were asked regarding 1) the

¹ The translation of Sūrah Āli 'Imrān: 103 ﴿And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, *brothers*. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.﴾

² Amin Abdul Aziz, "Governance in a Contemporary Islamic Negara," *Journal of Islamic Governance* 1, no. 1 (2015), <https://islamicgovernance.org/jig1-p1/>. <https://doi.org/10.53105/jig.1-1>.

challenges they faced when developing themselves, 2) their future plans until graduation, and 3) their plans to improve teamwork. Tutorial sessions were available for the students to discuss these questions in a small group of fewer than 20 people, attended by qualified tutors. During these sessions, students were encouraged to participate and be reflective. Then, students were required to answer the three quizzes online. 424 answers were collected onto a single document (~240,000 words, each), generating a rich corpus reflecting undergraduates' perceptions of the quizzes posted. This corpus was then analysed using Atlas.ti, a powerful qualitative data analysis software. Following the recursive and holistic approaches to the computer-assisted NCT (noticing-collecting-thinking) analysis,¹ a list of initial codes was generated using the 'Word List' and 'Cloud' functions in Atlas.ti (see Figure 1), while still being open to additional codes. A narrowed research question is then generated for this preliminary study: what are the issues mentioned by the students when developing themselves pertaining to each *Maqṣad* (objective, singular for *Maqāṣid*)? These codes were then systematically categorised as they pertain to the five *Maqāṣid*. Note that the original quizzes did not explicitly inquire regarding the five *Maqāṣid*, purposely designed to illicit the students' frame of mind. Additionally, students were limited in the number of words given for them to answer the quizzes, affixing additional pressure to them in order to gather swift and reflexive responses.

Figure 1. Preliminary Codes Derived by Atlas.ti's Built-in 'Cloud' Function

¹ Susanne Frieze, *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: London : SAGE, 2014), 16.

Based on a preliminary exploration, the majority of students covered issues on the preservation and promotion of Life, Intellect, and Progeny, but not necessarily relating to Faith and Wealth. With regards to the preservation and promotion of Life, the conversations revolve around healthy living (including attainment of a healthy body, and healthy food consumption), and emotional resilience. This is then linked to the preservation and promotion of Intellect, with issues about academic study, skill acquisition, mental health, and the growth mindset. As expected, students expressed their concerns and challenges with their academic studies. Additionally, many students expressed that they wanted to also focused on various soft-skill (e.g., communication, leadership, public speaking) and hard-skill (e.g. programming, drawing) acquisitions. Some of the ‘skills’ are part of character-building, such as self-discipline, open-mindedness, compassion, patience, courage, and confidence. On the preservation and promotion of Progeny, it concerns their family, especially parents, whether it relates to either the pressure imposed on them from their family members, or to giving back to their parents.

Intriguingly, there are fewer mentions regarding the preservation and promotion of Faith and Wealth. On the preservation and promotion of Faith, there are few mentions of the word ‘Allah’, and very little on the Prophet ﷺ, the Qur’ān, prayer, fasting, faith, sins, and so on. Several student’s narratives are on realigning their intentions to seek Allah’s pleasure, relying on a higher power, and on repentance to their mistakes done in the past, present, and future. Similarly, on the preservation and promotion of Wealth, few students expressed their concerns about employment, particularly on finding a job after graduating. A small fraction also talked about industrial placements they are currently taking, which posed another set of challenges. Overall, only a few students did relate their answers to all the five *Maqāṣid*. The following are two exceptional vignettes that have covered all five *Maqāṣid*:

“I would try to step out of my comfort zone by pushing myself to take on new challenges and overcoming my fears. When I succeed in overcoming my fears, it could boost my confidence and make me want to do more. Also, having the right intention to do things especially since I am a student nurse, I improve myself in terms of having knowledge and skills in order to give quality care to patients. Instead of developing myself to impress or catch up with others, I will constantly remind myself that I am doing it for my family and myself. When I stop comparing myself and accepting that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses, I

will be able to focus on my own merits and flaws. It would also prevent me from having negative feelings of others and gain self-acceptance. Other than that, practising efficient time management would also be a constant focus as I am someone who easily loses self-discipline and leaves my work to the last minute. Hence, having good time management would prevent me from procrastination and improve my quality of work. I learned that it is also important to balance work and leisure time because only focusing on work sometimes could cause burnout and stress which would affect our productivity. It would be better if this is done by spending time with family and friends and investing my time in hobbies instead of just scrolling through social media. Lastly, pray and ask for guidance from Allah in everything I do so that I always have the right *niat* (intention) and to succeed in this life and *akhirah*.” (1st-year female student from the Institute of Health Science).

“Firstly, I think most importantly is I need to correct my intention on why I study. Before, I may think it is because of my parents’ happiness and world material such as money. Now I realize, most importantly is because of Allah SWT then maybe next what I can say is my parent's happiness. I realize that when we start it with a good intention everything may go smoothly even when there's life test you can refer back why you start and remember it back as our motivation. Secondly is to never give up when facing some hard situation or even if you fail. We trust that behind this situation there is something big will come. For example, when you fail your test even when you have study very hard. We need to be [patient] and trust that Allah has greater plan for us. In every situation try to see a positive side, when you teach your heart to see positive side in a negative situation, I think you'll be more accepting. Lastly is maybe helping your friend and succeed together. Rather than competing and trying to achieve higher grade alone, I think if we help our friend, next time in the future when we need help Allah will help us in a way that we cannot imagine. We know that at some point of our life you will eventually need someone's help.” (2nd-year female student from the Faculty of Arts and Social Science).

Concluding Remarks

Everyone, especially young adults, is under pressure to perform and develop. It is imperative that individuals pursue holistic development of their heads, hearts, and hands, and focus on attaining true happiness and prosperity for themselves and others, resulting in higher and balanced collective performances in various sectors. Such happiness and prosperity can be categorised into the five *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah. Although the analysis of undergraduate students presented above is not conclusive, the lack of attention to some of the *Maqāṣid* may signal the lack of all-rounded development, which can potentially lead to future difficulties for the nation's development. For example, those that excel intellectually may criticise the spiritual journeys of others, disregard filial duties to their family, ignore societal cohesion, neglect environmental preservation, and abandon local economic development. Similarly, for education providers, the students must be provided with holistic opportunities.

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