

Towards Stability, Prosperity and Sustainability: A Case of College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University

Niloh Wae-u-seng¹

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Abstract

Thailand 4.0 pursues stability, prosperity, and sustainability. This paper intends to examine the present development of the College of Islamic Studied (CIS) within the context of current missions, works implemented and to be implemented in light of the notion of Thailand 4.0. It reveals that to some extent CIS has to relook into its missions and to work out the promising strategies to achieve stability, prosperity and sustainability. This paper provides some sort of policy implications and future actions in accord with Thailand 4.0.

Keywords: College of Islamic Studies, Thailand 4.0, stability, prosperity, sustainability

Introduction

Southern border provinces of Thailand which comprise majority of Muslim populace had long historical development. Being diverse from other part of the country in terms of culture, belief and way of life, this region was distinctive in its movement toward national stability and prosperity.

Thailand 4.0 becomes the turning point of the present development of the country. Focusing on stability, prosperity, and sustainability, it aims to turn Thailand into a value-based economy through innovation, technology and creativity, to create social well-being through realization of the full potential of all members of society, to raise human values by transforming Thais into competent human beings in 21st century, and to protect environment to become a livable society (*What is Thailand 4.0?*, n.d.). Its main focus is given to food, agriculture, biotechnology, healthcare, biomedicine, smart devices, robotics, automation, digital industry, internet of things (IoT), better technology, culture and creative industries, as well as a high-value services sector (*Industry 4.0, Thailand 4.0: What's if All Mean?*, n.d).

Recently, the Prime Minister, Prayut Chan-o-cha, [presented](#) a five-pronged policy approach including technology, human resource development, infrastructure, enterprises, and targeted industries to attract investments from the private sector. Rather, Thailand should not focus on productivity and efficiency anymore instead of

¹ Lecturer, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University

concentrate on stability, infrastructure, entrepreneurs and education (*Thailand 4.0 Means Opportunity Thailand*: Government taking steps to attract investments in targeted industries, n.d.).

In connection with Thailand's education at a tertiary level, issues like graduates' uncompetitiveness, lagging in mathematics and science and innovate less than country with comparable education, quality weakness of universities in the R&D field resulting in a skilled labor supply shortage, little communication and collaboration between university and industry (*Six steps to achieve Thailand 4.0*, n.d.) become the driving forces to Thailand 4.0.

As for the College of Islamic Studies (CIS), a government higher education institution, it cannot be excluded from this movement. Hence this paper intends to examine the ongoing development of CIS within the scope of its missions, works implemented and to be implemented in light of Thailand 4.0 that pursues stability, prosperity, and sustainability. It is hoped that the present paper would contribute to policy implications and further actions to achieve the notion of Thailand 4.0.

CIS: the existing missions revisited

CIS came into existence with several missions. Indeed, the key mission is still persisted on producing graduates who would assume the role as a change agent to the society. However, CIS has been developed from time to time and currently is in need of reconsidering its existing missions within the present context of Thailand 4.0.

At present, CIS is taking its functions in accordance with university's missions which encompass teaching and learning, research, academic services, and preservation of culture. However, formulating up-to-date missions constructively aligned with the present context of Thailand 4.0 and Education 4.0, CIS is expected to revisit its prevailing missions as follows:

1. Teaching and learning

Taking into account some key terms generated from Education 4.0 in concomitant with Thailand 4.0 such as connectivism, individualized, creative, innovative, information and digital literacy, problem solving, self-directed study, open sources, online study, to name few, CIS is expected to reconsider if the existing syllabuses or programs offered incorporate all of these concepts. In addition, the concept of knowledge integration should be translated into real practice. Pedagogy should also be revised and reshaped. Rather, through teaching and learning process, students are supposed to have innovative, creative and productive competence. By doing so, CIS is expected to take lead in teaching and learning approach.

2. Research

With regard to research, CIS under the authority of "Research University" is expected to take proactive missions in producing researched works related to the development of model education to promote stability, prosperity, and sustainability of the southern part of Thailand. The conventional research approach emphasizing on the textual analysis should be redesigned to pave way to broadening the horizon of knowledge suitable for the present context.

3. Academic services

As far as high expectation given to CIS in regard to academic services is concerned, CIS should work out a new model of academic services to the community. Providing academic service by the dint of certificate providers, mass open online lecture, and academic consultant are for example of new auspicious missions of CIS.

4. Preservation of culture and arts

Concerning preservation of culture and arts, CIS are expected to propagate Islamic culture to the public. Rather, CIS should set up new missions to meet with the demand of the community in accordance with the present development so that the stability, prosperity and sustainability would be promoted.

It is hoped that with truly committed efforts CIS will take roles as a catalyst of changes towards the desired missions and keep on moving to make contributions to the society.

Works implemented by CIS in light of Stability, Prosperity and Sustainability

CIS has implemented several activities in light of stability, prosperity and sustainability. The following are for example.

1. **Organizing an international conference on Islamic Studies**
This conference was financially supported by Thai government and organized by CIS once in every two years. The main objective of the conference is to promote Islamic studies and collaboration with Muslim world in working out workable plans and strategies to help develop Muslim education toward peace and prosperity directly related to stability and sustainability. The conference gave a positive image of the country in terms of stability and prosperity of Muslims in Thailand to the world.
2. **Establishment of *Wasatiyyah* Centre**
The newly established *Wasatiyyah* Centre plays substantial roles in promoting the notion of “justly balanced practices” of which any forms of violence and extremism are deprived. A series of workshop and seminars was organized to publicize the concept of *Wasatiyyah*. However, the Centre still has to put countless efforts in driving the concept into tangible practices since it is prerequisite to peaceful life and common stability and prosperity.
3. **Establishment of Islamic Studies Data Management Center**
This Centre plays active roles in spreading substantiated information regarding Islam through various channels i.e., articles, books, researched work, and online lecture.
4. **Establishment of Centre for Arabic Language Testing and Development**
The Centre was set up to work on developing Arabic language through workshop and seminars, book publication, training on

teaching method and etc. Apart from being the Centre providing certificates in Arabic language, it also serves as an advice-giver to the government sector in a matter related to Arabic language.

5. Organizing University Social Engagement (USE) program

This program was conducted by CIS to materialize the integrated model of community development towards stability, prosperity, and sustainability. The initial success of the program resulted in self-sufficient economy of the community.

6. Establishment of Islamic Demonstrative School

Islamic Demonstrative School was established with the aim to provide a model education for Muslim community in particular and other community in general. Its main objective is to produce students knowledgeable in sciences. It is hoped that the school is key instrumental in developing human resources in southern part of Thailand.

The above works are part of activities implemented by CIS to arrive at the notion of stability, prosperity, and sustainability. Yet, the current development requires CIS to move forward and make changes to its future enterprises.

Expected Works to be implemented by CIS in light of Stability, Prosperity and Sustainability

In order to achieve the notion of stability, prosperity and sustainability, CIS is expected to take the following movements:

1. CIS should pragmatically scrutinize all programs² offered in order to identify if they are relevant to the notion of stability, prosperity and sustainability. This may take the challenge of how to redesign the programs to suit the present development while preserving the essence of Islamic foundational knowledge. However, it seems that the name of the program itself does not reflect the so-called traditional curriculum that might not be relevant to the present development. In tackling this issue, the changing of the name of program like for example “Islamic Studies for Human Resource Development”, “Leadership and Innovation in Islamic Studies Teaching”, “Islamic Law and Business Administration” etc., seems necessary.
2. CIS should utilize the outcome-based learning (OBL) approach in reshaping the graduate attributes. Through OBL, CIS’s graduate attributes should be constructed in light of the notion of stability, prosperity, and sustainability. However, the graduate attributes generated recently from the department meeting held in Songkla

² The undergraduate programs comprise: Islamic Studies (Thai and International program), Middle-east Studies, Islamic Economic and Management, Islamic Studies Teaching, and Islamic Law; the postgraduate programs comprise: Islamic Studies, and Islamic Educational Administration and Management

- province on April 1, 2018, which encompass 1) **Islamic-embedded values**: *Wasatiyah* and *Rabbani*, 2) **integrated and applied knowledge**: deep knowledge, problem solving and critical thinking, and 3) **comprehensive skills**: information and digital literacy, leadership, research and innovation, and communication, and 4) **social and world engagement**: entrepreneurship, should be digested to form the new structure of programs and courses.
3. CIS should introduce new form of instruction. Teaching and learning should exist in the real world community and setting with emphasis on individual's demand and competencies. In addition, it should provide a platform for learners to develop their entrepreneurship skills, profession, and knowledge for working. Through self-directed and projected based learning approach, learners would be developed in terms of integrative, sharing, collaborative, creative, innovative and productive skills which are demanded for the present development. Importantly, knowledge into practice is the key success.
 4. CIS should take lead in research which could result in solutions to issues related to sustainable development. In so doing, CIS should work in collaboration with other university or partnership to form a group of researchers who have diverse expertise and then work out the issues to be solved. Only through these concerted efforts is sustainable development materialized.
 5. CIS should take a proactive roles in providing services to the community with emphasis on social economy and higher value-added activities. This may take form of a service center providing certification, academic advisors, and open education by dint of massive open online course (MOOC).

CIS should come out with the determined visions and missions to foster stability, prosperity, and sustainability in conjunction with organizational restructuring, human resource development, and emerging technology utilization. Gap between knowledge and technology should not be widen. The old system should be changed and reformed to be compatible with the present development.

Concluding Remark

The establishment of CIS brought about inspiration and hope to Muslims in southern province in particular and Muslims in other part of the country in general. Since its inception, CIS has played pivotal roles in producing graduates who became the agents of social development in all sphere of lives i.e., economic, social, politic, and education. CIS also took roles in bringing about peace and harmony to the society. These could be witnessed from the previous and present successful works of CIS.

Since the country is moving towards Thailand 4.0 that pursues stability, prosperity, and sustainability, CIS has to take part in this endeavor and come up with new roles and expected actions to be taken to materialize it. Under this circumstance, it seems

that its success relies on collective efforts through real collaboration, cooperation, and coordination.

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