

# An Integrated Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum: It's Qur'anic Perspective

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## Abstract

This study aims to find out the importance of Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum and its relation to the Holy Qur'an. Producing a student with integrated holistic personality is the main focus of this curriculum. Therefore, it emphasizes on the secondary education system in several schools of Malaysia to prepare an Ulul-al-Bab generation. The implementation of Ulul-al-Bab program is a new perception in Malaysia educational system. In particular, this program will help to produce Ulul-al-Bab generation with a three characteristics of Quranik, Ensiklopedik and Ijtihadik. Currently, Ministry of Education Malaysia is giving a lot of efforts to achieve the mission of the program. Thus, it is very important to look into this program since the aim of education and knowledge is to produce an individual who will serve for the human kind as well being a good (khalifah) vicegerent of Allah s.w.t. The aim of this paper to show the significance of new Ulul-al-Bab curriculum and its importance for the rest of the Muslim countries in the world.

**Keywords:** Ulul-al-Bab concept, curriculum, knowledge, Quranik, Ensiklopedik and Ijtihadik generation

## 1. Introduction

So far Ulul-al-Bab is a new curriculum program, which is going to integrate with the existing program in MARA Junior Science College (MRSM) and religious school program including Tahfiz Al-Quran in Malaysia. This program is an initiation of YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh, former chairman of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) and Education Minister of Malaysia with an intention of integrating Islamic education into all curriculum programs in schools (Subirin et al. 2017 & Shahril & Sidek, 2013). In order to success of this program, research activities, seminars and conferences is being carried out by a number of educationist, where, Dr. Umi Kalthom Abdul Manaf, senior lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia is one of the pioneer activists and researchers. Therefore, in 2005 government supported four Imtiaz Secondary School and Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) in 2009 put the program into operation (Hayati et al. 2015). MRSM Kota Putra, Besut has been chosen as pioneer for this program in Terengganu and other two MRSM in Kepala Batas and MRSM in Gemencheh of Malaysia.

Thus, immediately after years of implementation the program, in 2011 a research was done by Shuukery Mohamad in Baha Melayu titled 'inovasi kurikulum sekolah menengah: kes sekolah imtiaz'. From his research, Kalthom & Fadzilah (2017) mentioned in their research 'Evaluating the Humanistic Curriculum Implementation of MRSM Ulul Albab Program' several positive outcome-based achievements of Imtiaz Secondary School through years of using this curriculum program. Result showed Imtiaz School got top 10 in PMR and top 20 in SPM in 2009, Malaysian two big public examinations. Therefore, Subirin et al. (2017) argued that in order to success of this program, teachers need to be trained accordingly, while teachers are seen as role-model for the program. To Merfat (2016) teachers are the main factor to achieve the objectives of any curriculum program. Accordingly, Subirin et al. (2018) stated that to achieve the required standard within the program, authorities need to prepare experts through establishing Ulul Albab Professional Development Program. Preparing experts for this program in terms of professional development training would be the index towards Ulul Albab teachers' quality to produce the Ulul Albab generation. Curriculum, ultimately to help students to become conscious of their learning path and re-activate their prior knowledge related to the subject. Then, a teacher should have clear information on the implemented curriculum to overcome the problem addressed by that running curriculum (Leoniek & Sigrid, 2018).

The MRSM Ulul Albab Program was introduced to join both Qur'anic (religious Science) and rational science education within a single curriculum. The goal of this curriculum is to prepare an individual with a combined knowledge of religious and modern education (Kalthom & Fadzilah, 2017). According to Kalthom et al. (2014) this

group of individual will be known as an Al-Bab generation in Malaysia. This generation will gain knowledge not only in the field of religious sciences (Fardu-ain / compulsory) a branch of social science but also modern science (Fardi-Kifayah / obligatory) a branch of hard science or acquired knowledge. By combining these two branches of knowledge, an individual can beautify his or her current living world and the world after death. Individual with Ulul al-Bab characteristic, indeed, an important citizen who can overcome the problems related Islamic daily life, difficulties faced by the others surrounding of the society related to practical field and finally the whole world at large. The main outcomes of the program is to have a Ulul-al-Bab generation, who possess good knowledge, skills, qualities, moral, responsibilities, and accountability to be committed to fulfill the status of Khalifah (vicegerent) of Allah and to the state and nation.

Thus, to produce an ideal human being (insankamil) and to develop superior civilization accordance with the Islamic teachings and methodologies, an integrated Ulul-al-Bab curriculum program is required for the whole Muslim education system (Shahril & Sidek, 2013).

## **2. Ulul Al-Bab Curriculum**

Ulul-al-Bab program emphasizes a different teaching and learning process that places a strong emphasis on revealed knowledge refers to religious sciences; remembrance of Allah, regular five times pray, following the wajibat (obligation) and Shariyah (law) of Islamic religion imposed by all mighty Allah and acquired knowledge related to rational hard sciences means acquired science.

Therefore, the concept of Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum fits the idea of ‘Holistic Integrated Islamic Education Process’, which is the main focus of the most Muslim educationist to solve the problem of dualism, faced by Muslim Ummah.

Dualism in education is the contemporary crucial crisis of the Muslim world created by dualistic educational system, a separation between revealed or religious knowledge and secular modern or acquired knowledge (Rosnani, 2004). Bringing together these two systems of education in one platform is the main goal of Integrated Islamic Education Program. This is not directly mentioned by Ulul-al-Bab program. Therefore, Even, Quranic Commentary gave a clear picture about Ulul-al-Bab concept of integration between religious and modern knowledge by the two verbs yajkurun (remembrance of God) related to religion, part of social science and yatafakkarun (rational thinking) related to human faculty, a function of Aql (intellect).

So, this Al-bab program emphasize on the self-management (managing the self) through religious knowledge and managing the system through acquiring knowledge to overcome the dualistic system of education existing in the Muslim countries. Therefore, concerning to this, Malaysia is the first county who introduced this education system within some institutions for the last few years.

In the light of Malaysian context, this program is focusing to produce Ulul-al-Bab generation with three characteristics; Quranik, Ensiklopedik and Ijtihad. This program is developed purposely to produce Ulul Alabab generation in the Malaysia (Subirin et al., 2017). To Hayati et al. (2015) it is a new experience in Malaysian education system that is believed as a high-quality holistic integrated learning program which will produce a balanced individual.

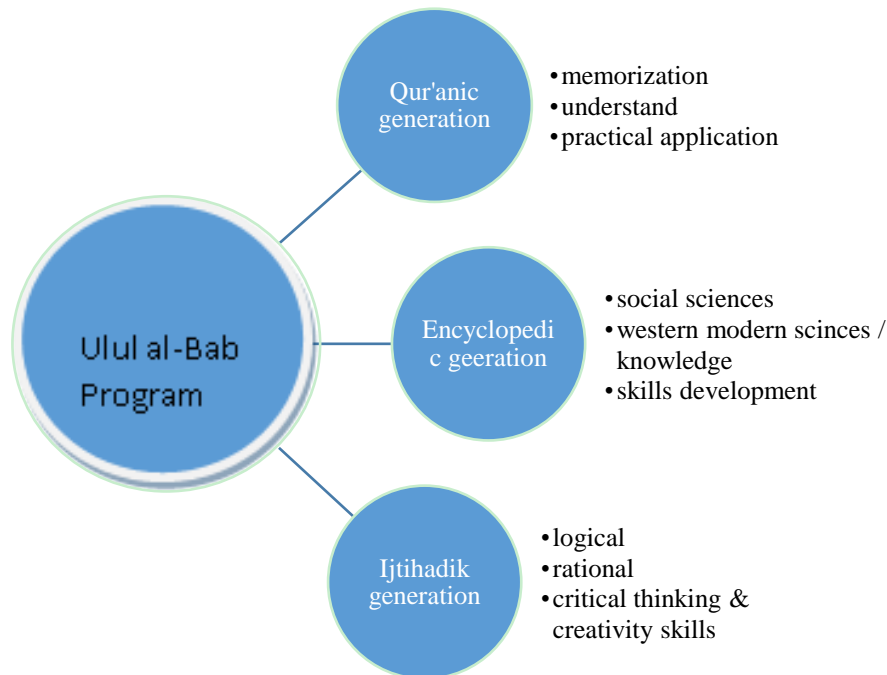


Figure 1. Radial list of Ulul-al-Bab Program

- Learners of this program in Qur'anic concept, are required to memorize the 30 Juz of Al Qur'an including literal meaning of verses, understand textual and contextual meaning, think, practical implementation and circulate the goal of Qur'an. Students need to memorize the whole Qur'an within 3 years.
- Beside Qur'anic generation, it will develop another generation called encyclopedic generation. Meaning to say, this generation will be educated in the various branches of knowledge, languages and become a resource person for the society. Mastering in insaniah skills, IT skills and principles of skills developments.
- Finally, in Ijtihad concept, students will be able to provide solution for the Muslim Ummah through improving critical thinking, creativity skill and being an innovative minded, joining the activities related to good character and physical development and the entrepreneurship activities to develop an individual business mind (Shahril & Sidek, 2013).

### 3. Aim and Objective of Ulul Albab Program

Ulul-al-Bab educational program of 'MRSM' is designed to produce an Ulul-al-Bab generation, who will be expert, skillful, entrepreneurs and technocrats in the light of Holy Quran and Sunnah. They are harmonious and balanced, have profound belief in Allah and devotion to Him and led an Islamic life style (Subirin et al., 2017).

### 4. Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum in the Light of Holy Qur'an

It is a qur'anic term, which is focusing on holistic development of an individual, who is considered as 'insan kamil'. There are two words; Ulul and Al-Bab. Kalthom et al. (2014) stated from the Marbawi Dictionary that 'Ulu' means 'who has' and Al-Albab is a plural form of "lub" means 'essence of something' (having intellect). Therefore, the word Ulul-al-Bab means the 'possessors of intellect', 'the people of wisdom' or 'the people of understanding'. Understanding of ulum Aqliyah (rational hard science) and ulum Naqliyah (religious social / human science).

The term is mentioned many places in the holy Qur'an. The most important use of this word in the verse 190 of Surah Ali Imran, "Indeed, inside the creation of heavens and earth and the changing between day and night has Signs for the men of understanding".

Thus, immediately in the next verse 191 Allah (s.w.t) defined the Ulul-al-Bab with four characteristics; "Who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides, think (logical / rational way) about the creation of the heavens and the earth, acknowledge and recognize the creation that might not unnecessarily creation and finally, glory be to Allah and asking forgiveness to save form his hellfire (in the hereafter)".

## 5. Qur'anic Illustration of Ulul-al-Bab

Thus, it is clear, that verse 190 mentioned the word Ulul-al-Bab (man of understanding) and the next verse 191 defined them through introducing four characteristics of Ulul-al-Bab (a man of understanding).

So, firstly, the man of understanding will remember Allah in their every situation, which is the way to make a good relation with Allah through Tazakkur. Secondly, they will think (Tafakkhur) about the creation of Allah. Tafakkhur (thinking) means using the rational thought and logical faculty of the brain (Aql) to understand the creation of heaven and earth, which is the relation to acquired science (ulum Aqliyah). Thirdly, after thinking intellectually, they will acknowledge (i'tiraaf) the creation of Allah and announce the greatness of Allah. Fourth and finally, they will articulate his glorify and purification (Tasbih) and ask forgiveness from the hellfire through their full submission and surrender into power of almighty Allah.

So, characteristics of Ulul-al-Bab, 'Tazakkur or Zikir' (remembrance), acknowledge (i'tiraaf) and glorify (Tasbih) refer to revealed knowledge that related to religious sciences under human or social sciences, while second characteristic, 'Tafakkur or Fikir' (thinking) refers to acquired knowledge that related to rational sciences or Hard Sciences. Thus, 'man of understanding', is a man who has comprehensive knowledge in both Religious Sciences and Modern Sciences.

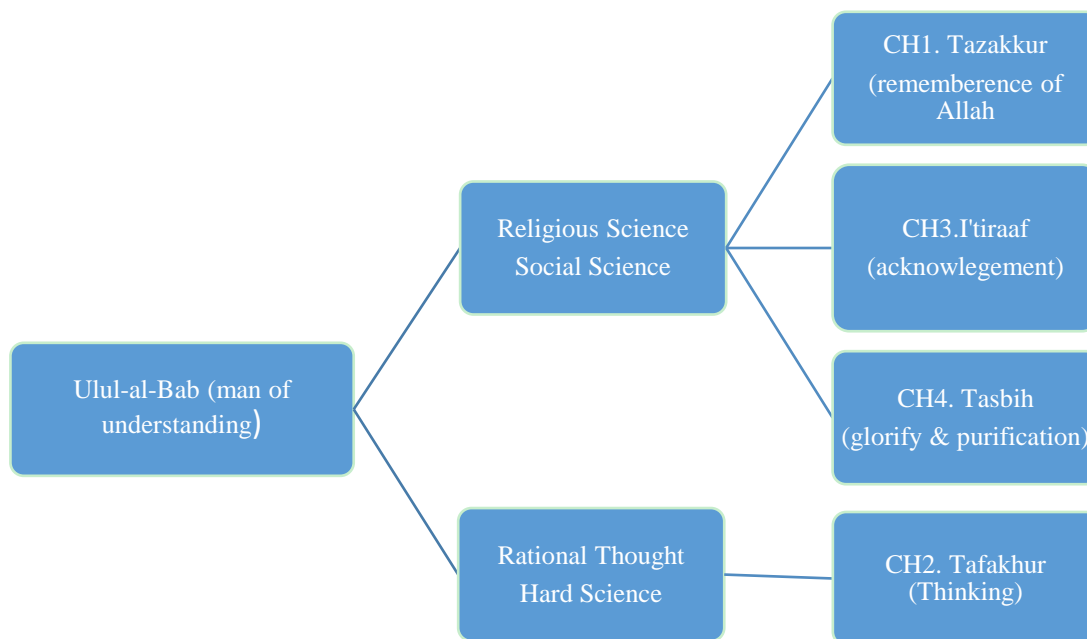


Figure 2. Qur'anic picture of Ulul-Al-Bab

Therefore, from the above Qur'anic description, it is clear that Ulul Albab program will produce a generation which will get the quality of rational intellectual thought and spiritual beliefs.

## 6. Purpose of Education and Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum

Education is an ongoing process in the human life. The purpose of education is very dynamic and effective, particularly its play a vital role in the current global and complex industrialized societies to develop the human resources. Education prepares a man to equip for him and for the society in order to contribute for the economic development of a country (Khan, 1986). But Muslim educationist, Ashraf (1985) argued with the Islamic approach that education must aim constant and steady development of complete human qualities by tutoring mankind's spirit, intellect, rational self, emotions and physical senses. In all these ground of human being, education provides motivation towards both individual and collective aspects to achieve betterment and perfection of man. Therefore, all the phases of individual, society and humanity, absolute surrender to Allah is utmost goal of Muslim education.

To establish this aim of education, there is a need to develop a curriculum content which produces an individual who represents the characteristic of Ummah Wasatiyah (Muslim citizen with balance). This Wasatiyah (balance) will be growing to the students through blending approach of religious and acquired knowledge (Kamal, 2010).

Resulting to this, an individual will achieve the moral, intellectual, spiritual, mental and physical advantage and fulfill the material gain for his life and serve the whole mankind. Therefore, this curriculum will produce a new generation, who will possess a model of integrated Islamic personality (Ghazali, 1989).

In a professorial lecture on 26th June 2013, on 'Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge and the Role of the University in the Context of De-Westernization and Decolonization' Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud emphasized on religious and acquired science. He considered religious science as Fardu ain while acquired science is considered as Fardu kifayah science. These two kinds of knowledge are interrelated and can contribute to the holistic development of the students.

Commonly, the idea of development is like the idea of Syed Ali Ashraf to be exact, the 'balanced growth' of the total personality of a man. According to his philosophy, individual development is the development of a good human which will work for decent society, resident and country development (Ashraf, 1994).

### **7. Importance of Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum**

Curriculum is the hub of any learning institution. An institution cannot exist without a curriculum. It is the guide line to teach a topic. It's very important as it preparing human being with profound belief in Allah. Without combining religious and acquired knowledge, a truly Islamic education system cannot be thought. In order to confirm a new Muslim generation with an integrated holistic personality, a Muslim educator should ensure an integrated curriculum for the current Muslim education system.

An example given by Mehdy (2003) about Water, students consider water as a nia'mat (bounty) of Allah and they know some basic usefulness of the water. They only understand water through some verses of the Qur'an related to the water. Express their thanks to Allah by saying (Alhamdulillah), just a thankful servant of Allah which is the sign of formal worship of Allah related to zikir. There is no discussion about the composition of the water, theory of the water and reasoning thought (refers to Fikir / rational thinking) about the water because of the focusing on religious sciences only. But in the meantime, if a student knows the essence of water and composition of it, like H<sub>2</sub>O and enough understanding about water then he will be master in the natural science which is under the rational (zikir) or acquired sciences. Same as, religious sciences background students only know about animals and plant as a means of beautification of creation and decoration of the earth through the various verses from the holy Qur'an. While, nurturing benefit, balance for the environment and rational thinking of destroying the animal and plant will create shortage in the nature which threat human existence through occurring various natural disasters on the earth is less understood by the students due to lack of acquired knowledge or modern sciences in the curriculum (Mehdy, 2003). Therefore, to Sidek (2009b) zikr and fikir are required to integrate in the curriculum for being a balance individual through understanding the bounties (nikmat) of God given to us, not unnecessary.

So, studying theoretical knowledge and understand the knowledge practically, a student can increase his level of iman (belief). By what, a student can endeavor to worship of Allah in a best way of their practice as well as can fulfill their role on the earth as a Khalifah (vicegerent) of Allah actively.

Thus, Ulul-al-Bab curriculum process will produce new Quranik, Ensiklopedik and Ijtihadik generations who can do worship of Allah properly and serve the community accordingly. Kalthom & Fadzilah (2017) believe that by introducing this program, Malaysian education system will get new experience, particularly education under MARA system will be much more better and will able to produce high quality student. Thus, Muslim educationist Ashraf (1988) also argued that, curriculum with Islamic orientation can improve the sense of Aqidah (creed) which helps individual to manage the self (Islamizing the self) and accentuate on the duties of human being as Khalifah (vicegerent of Allah). To him, education with Islamic perspective can produce an ordinary individual with a shape of Al-Insan al-Kamil.

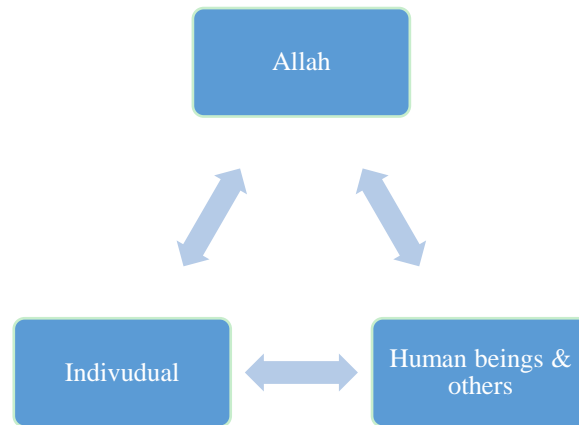


Figure 3. A model of multidirectional relationship of Insan kamil

This map shows a possible relationship of insan kamil. The three characteristics Quranik, Ensiklopedik and Ijtihadik help an individual to become an insan kamil through acquiring the quality of managing the self and system.

The different three terms of Ulul-al-Bab process suggest a possible development inside an individual through (a) gaining a vast knowledge on religious matter to make a strong relationship with his creator (Allah), (b) full of knowledge in the branch of human-based social sciences and modern hard sciences (acquired knowledge) for encyclopedic characteristic and, (c) mastering in the rational logical science, creativity skills and Islamic thinking for Ijtihadik characteristic. These three characteristics support an individual to reach the level of Insan Kamil. Therefore, to produce these generation, current Muslim education system needs to introduce Islamic religious knowledge and acquired knowledge parallel through implementing Ulul-al-Bab curriculum program.

The following is researcher suggested technique for implementing the ulul al-bab program to produce Insan Kamil:

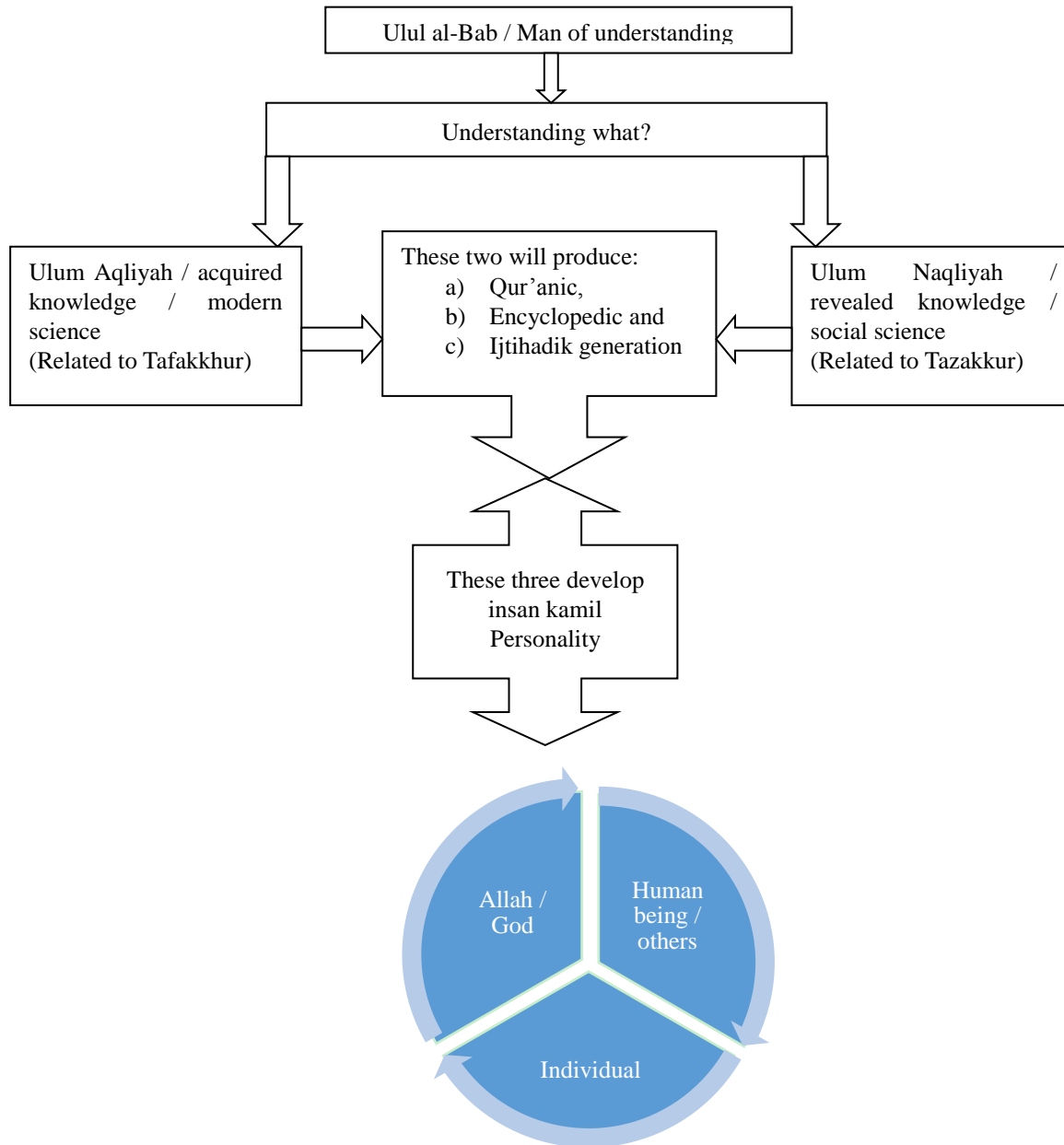


Figure 4. Researcher conceptualized model of ulul al-bab program

**8. Ulul-al-Bab Curriculum: Holistic Development and Success**

Dualistic education system separated between religious education and modern education. Hence, it's not easy to produce an individual having both religious sciences knowledge and acquired modern sciences due to its dualistic system. One system focus on religious knowledge, while other only focuses on modern knowledge separately. So this system will not be able to fulfill the function of knowledge (Rosnani, 2006). According to al-Attas (1991) function of knowledge is managing the self and managing the system. Students should know the management of self and system by proper education, which is the formal process of getting knowledge. Therefore, every student should know managing the self through humanity-based religious education and managing the system through science-based modern education.

Managing the self (Islamizing the self), a student needs to know about human science that is humanity-based education. This follows Aqidah, Shariah, Akhlak, Ibadah and other all basic ritual activities that related to the system of belief, oneness of God. These religious subjects are important to grow a sense of moral values inside the heart of

each student. To manage the system (Islamizing the system) second function of knowledge, need to know how to manage the resources given by Allah such as food, drink, environment, natural resources, science and technologies, which organizes the life (life style), related to system.

To al-Attas (1978) Modern science and knowledge are covered with the western secular philosophy and worldview, which is no spiritual in nature and materialistic, and contradict to the Islamic outlook, standards and Islamic worldview. According to Wan (1998) Modern western knowledge is not suitable for the Muslim due to mixed it up with the value of western secularism. Subsequently, it led to uncertainty, disbelief and subjectivism in the human life. Unfortunately, most of scientific innovation became curse for human being instead of being blessing for them. Therefore, modern knowledge and science need to be separated from the western features.

Thus, Sidek (2009a) stated that, modern science is value free, must need value of utilization. Value based education is one of the component of knowledge which under humanity-based religious education. Value is a source that comes from soul, that guided by Allah. Through relating value with the system related to hard science, student can be successful because they have moral value of utilization which Islamizing the system (Hassan et al., 2010).

According to al-Attas (1989) previously human studied science and technology to understand, to regulate, to control and for managing the natural world in order to get the success, prosperity and usefulness. Thus, Muslim students consider the science and technology as for humankind because have value of utilization.

While, to the west, science and technologies are the mean to gain their own interest and benefit. They look at the material achievement by using these, which is their prime value. They are not concern about the value of utilization because; science and technology are not merged with religious value which is under humanity based education, first component of knowledge.

While, among the west, scientists always looks at the final result and try to be honest with the final result of the science, and this is the value to them. They ignore value-based education, first component of knowledge under human science and that is why they are value free when they utilize the technology.

For example, nuclear power, which can be used for electric power for human kind but they use it for power play around the world as a result they use it to destroy the nation like Afghanistan, Iraq and many other countries of the world because of value free, no value of utilization at all. So, use of technology must be bounded by moral values, that only use for human kind not for harm to them.

Furthermore, western people develop the science and technology with their own value that developed their own perspective rather than religious value. Technological development is only their main concern which is considered as human capital. So, being a doctor, scientist, politician, and teacher are the development of human capital to the west. While, we Muslim, to us development of human capital means a comprehensive development and growth of a human being through holistic development, which drives towards a concept of Alamiyyah (worldly) and Akhlakiah (character) development in nature.

## 9. Conclusion

Through this study, it came to realize that dualistic education of Muslim countries cannot prepare the students to carry out the function of knowledge. Muslim students should study not only religious oriented subject but science based education too. When, they study the science, technology, medicine, political science and many more subjects related to hard science then, they can manage the system besides managing the self. So, once students will be a doctor, scientist, politician, physician, biologist hence, they can use it for human kind as they have their own background of human science knowledge that carry the value of utilization and the system how to manage the self. Both, Science-based modern and humanity-based religious education is equally important to make a man fully equipped to be useful to him (self) and for the society (system). Therefore, without further delay, ministry of education and curriculum specialist of Muslim countries must concern to prepare and implement Ulul-al-Bab curriculum to produce Ulul-al-Bab generation with a holistic integrated Islamic personality in accordance with Allah's will.

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