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*Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam dan Pranata Sosial*

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# Waqf Higher Education: Implementation Model In University College Bestari (UCB), Terengganu, Malaysia

*Baharuddin Bin Sayin*

*Muhammad Hamizan Bin Ab Hamid*

**Abstract:** *Waqf higher education was an important asset in developing knowledgeable intellectuals. This waqf higher education was a successful institution that uses waqf as its source of operation. It can be seen through the model of College University Bestari (UCB) in the implementation of higher education waqf. The objective of this writing is to focus on the historical background, the development of waqf asset, contribution and beneficial distribution of waqf property as well as challenges and prospects of higher education in Malaysia. The analysis result found that UCB had been successfully expanded the waqf funds through the waqf scheme of land lot by getting approval from Terengganu Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (MAIDAM). Thus, the implementation of educational waqf held by UCB can be used as a model to other educational institutions in order to develop waqf property and generate revenue. Therefore, the model that existed in this waqf institution need to be systematically planned and implemented to ensure that it can be a guarantee and catalyst towards education finance system of the Muslim community.*

**Keywords:** Waqf Higher Education, Model dan Education

## INTRODUCTION

**W**aqf institution plays a very important role towards economic development of a country. This institution was able to provide various facilities such as education, health centers, place of worship, homestay, agriculture and poultry activities and etc. This can be proved through the historical evidences of the glorious Ottoman Caliphate governance that carried out most of their operations by using the waqf system for the welfare of Muslim community (Davut Gazi Benli, 2014).

Waqf property had also proved that it had a great potential to develop Muslims economy and can assist in improving their living standard towards a more conducive life. Apart from that, waqf institution was able to provide dimension of medical treatment and hospital, funding for educational activities in primary, secondary and tertiary level as well as research activity and provide job opportunities (Alli Ahmed Khan, 2014).

In fact, if waqf property was wisely generated, it was able to reduce management expenses of the government and reduce the dependence on the government funds (Abdul Halim Sunny, 2007). Every year, during the presentation of the government budget, the financing allocation for educational program and training had shown an improvement. For instance, in the presentation of 2015 budget by the Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak who is also the Finance Minister had stressed that government had allocated RM56 billion to finance various educational programs and training (2015 budget presentation) compared to RM54.6 billion in 2014 budget (2014 budget presentation). This shows the increase of budget allocation for education including the provision for higher education institution.

Therefore, this research paper was prepared to highlight the implementation of waqf higher education model in University College Bestari (UCB), Terengganu in Malaysia, a College University that did not receive funding from the government but equally capable in operation just like a public university that receive funding from the government. UCB development did not receive funding from the government in accordance to the East Coast Economic Region Development Plan (ECER) which was launched in October, 2007. One of the cores in ECER development was educational development at *Taman Ilmu* in Besut covering 283 acres which will become a new university town that will be occupied by 10,000 inhabitants (<http://www.epu.gov.my>).

Aspects that will be covered in this research paper including the historical background of UCB establishment, asset development of UCB waqf, contribution and distribution of the benefits of UCB as well as challenges and prospects of waqf higher education in Malaysia. This productive waqf model can be an example to improve existing waqf educational institutions in Malaysia. In this context, the practice of waqf higher education in Malaysia does not become a culture in Malaysia because the society is too dependent on the provision of government funding.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BESTARI**

University College Bestari (UCB), or formerly known as Smart Technology College or its short name, KTB started its operation on 14th June 1998 at a temporary campus located in Saujana Village, Setiu, Terengganu ([www.ucbestari.edu.my/info](http://www.ucbestari.edu.my/info)). The capacity of early student's reception was 304 students. The early establishment idea was triggered by YM Dato' Dr. Tengku Mahmud bin Mansor, a President of Malaysia Orphans Welfare Association (PEYATIM) who was also a Chairman of KTB

Executive. As PEYATIM President, he had planned to meet the ultimate objective of defending orphans welfare in the whole Malaysia will not become a reality if the focus is stopped on the care and maintenance aspects alone (Utusan, 2010).

In this context, YM Dato' Dr Tengku Mahmud bin Mansor and the committee members had been working to develop a college with the aim to be an outlet for orphans to get opportunities to further their study as best as possible because there was various potential and ability among the orphans to be successful. Besides that, a paradigm shift in activities at orphanages began to occur and lead towards the educational development.

Hence, in order to realise the establishment of a permanent campus, UCB had launched a waqf scheme program of brick donation with the aim of rising funding for construction of a permanent UCB campus in Setiu, Terengganu. This matter had got the attention of YB. Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's Defense Minister during that time by opening the waqf scheme of the brick donation on 24th August 2000 located at Hotel Istana, Kuala Lumpur (Utusan Online, 2002).

The construction of a permanent UCB campus had been implemented step-by-step. In 2004, KTB had moved to a fully equipped campus located in Putera Jaya Village, Setiu Terengganu. This current location was very suitable with a complement of wide range of basic facilities. The surrounding environment surrounded with peaceful villages that offer a very conducive learning environment. Among the facilities provided were Administration and Academic Building, Theatre Hall, 3 Dormitory Blocks that can accommodate 2160 students, prayer room, sport courts, multipurpose hall and many more. It's located in the middle of main road that links Kuala Terengganu and Kota

Bharu. The journey from Kuala Terengganu City Center as far as 65 kilometer only takes about 1 hour. On August 2012, KTB had been upgraded to become a Higher Education Institution which known as College University Bestari (UCB) ([www.ucbestari.edu.my/info](http://www.ucbestari.edu.my/info)).

UCB Campus Site with an area of 128 hectares / 320 acres was a land given by Terengganu Government to develop a higher education institution especially to meet the needs of orphans particularly throughout Terengganu and generally throughout Malaysia (Sinar Harian, 2014). Although in the beginning of its establishment, UCB was one of the private institutions (IPTS) that only offered higher education for the orphans; but, during its development stage, UCB also expanded higher education opportunities for all, such as for children from Poor People Development Program (PPRT), children of *Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia* (AIM), rural area children and many more who could not cover by General Higher Learning Institution (IPTA). ([www.ucbestari.edu.my/info](http://www.ucbestari.edu.my/info)).

So far, a total of 1,500 students attend nine (9) educational programs come from throughout the country including Sabah and Sarawak. UCB offers courses for Diploma, Degree, Master and PhD. Several Learning Center branches are still in its establishment process.

Various strategies have been devised by the management team to improve teaching effectiveness and administration efficiency to realize its goal of becoming a university college that produce quality and competitive graduate students. Enormous efforts had been made to diversify courses and increase the number of Bachelor program. UCB was expected to provide a variety of new programs at diploma level such as Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering and

Nursing, meanwhile, Science Computer program will be offered during the Bachelor level.

Apart from that, students' moral character development was also emphasized especially through students' society and co-curriculum in order to produce students who are academically and morally balanced. Students' welfare has become a priority by introducing the concept of 'learn first, pay later' until they get sponsorship. This effort can create opportunities for the poor to also obtain higher education.

Therefore, the expert combination of the Board of Directors, Management, Administration, academic and support staff who were very concerned with the low-income earners and orphans became the strength of this college to continue its development and effort to produce the best students in this country.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF WAQF ASSET IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BESTARI**

Regarding to Dr Tengku Mahmud Tengku Mansor, since the beginning of its establishment, UCB aimed to become a university with waqf concept similar to the best University Al-Azhar, this was because up till now Malaysia still not have any waqf university (Utusan, 2010).

As a private higher education institution (IPTS), the only asset belongs to UCB was a campus land site as far as 128 hectare/ 320 acres (1,299,000 square feet) in Setiu, Terengganu which was awarded by Government of Terengganu. UCB aimed to make this campus land site as waqf land. Due to the fact that this waqf was subject to the State Islamic Religious Council; therefore, various efforts had been made to get the approval that resultant with

fruitful achievement in May 2009 (MAIDAM.03-003/46-(11) dated 13 July 2009). In December 2010 in conjunction with Muharram 1431H, UCB waqf had officially launched by His Majesty Yang Di-Pertua Agong Al-Wathiqu Billah Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Ibni Almarhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafiyallah Shah located in Islamic Civilizations Garden, Kuala Terengganu.

This UCB asset development located on the 320 acres land sites (1,299,000 square feet) in Setiu, Terengganu that had been used to develop UCB campus since 1998. This land site will be sold to the buyer/the public at the price as low as RM30.00 per 0.1 square meters or RM300.00 per square meter on the condition that buyer need to donate the whole land to the UCB. The sale of this waqf land was begun since the early 2011 and was expected to fully sell within the next five years. For each purchase of this waqf land, buyer will be exempted from income tax. (No.LHDN: 01/35/42/51/179-6.3872).

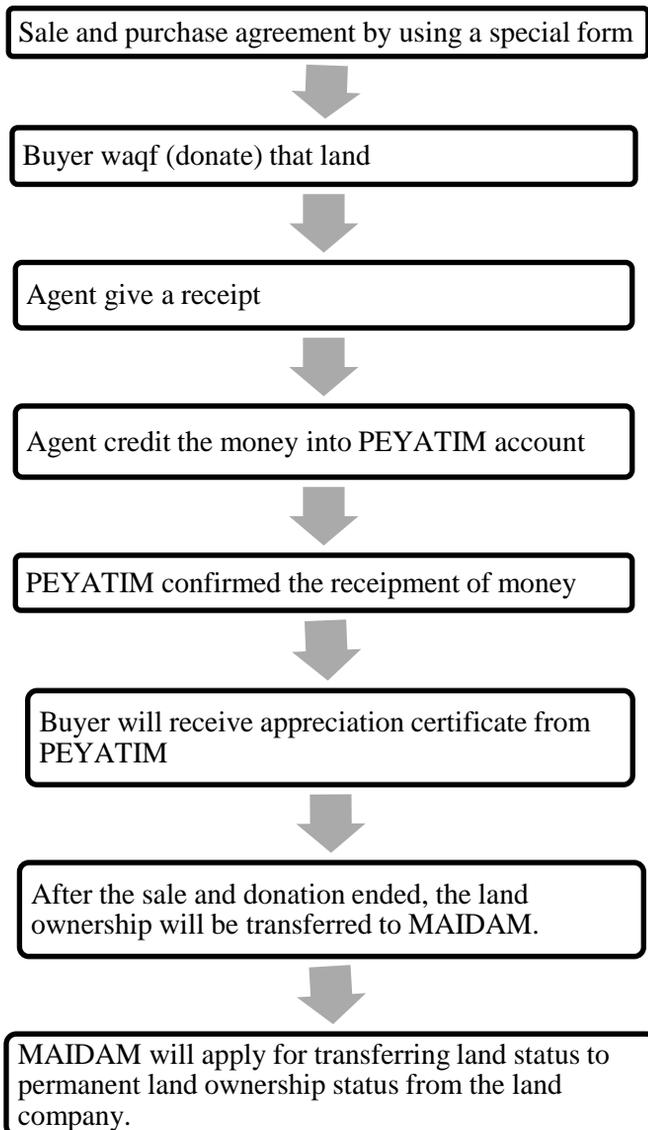
UCB expected to get waqf fund of RM389.7 million after all land lots had been successfully sold by using waqf scheme of land lots (Utusan, 21 December 2011). Fund raised will be used to develop various infrastructure project and project that resultant with high economic returns to further enhance economic cycle of waqf property in the future.

Hence, in order to realize the sale of waqf scheme of the land lots, UCB had initiated various sale promotions via mass media, brochure and website. UCB had also appointed agents to collect the waqf land payment service in 2,000 branches of Malaysia Post Office, National Saving Bank, Islamic Bank, May bank and CIMB that can be found throughout the country.

## **FUND MANAGEMENT OF UCB WAQF**

The management of this waqf fund had been managed by a Board of Trustees and Management Committee of University College Bestari (UCB). In this case, the administration and management was led by CEO and co-operation by the staff concerned.

### **The Sale Process of Waqf Land Donation**



The early development (phase 1) of University College Bestari (UCB), Setiu, Terengganu was the result of donations from various parties such as government agencies, private parties, corporate leaders, businessmen and public donations in the form of donations, waqf and etc (Hanida Abdul Samat, 2003, also refer Utusan, 25 August 2000). In this case, UCB was still in operation of gradual construction of infrastructure construction process based on its need and owned fund. The phases that had been carried out include:

## **FIRST PHASE**

In 1998, University College Bestari Campus was located at Saujana Village, Permaisuri Setiu, Terengganu. The campus had been rented from Terengganu Family Development Foundation (YPKT) which had full facilities such as 2 dormitory building blocks, offices, air conditioning lecture rooms, a prayer room and cafeteria.

In 2004, UCB had moved to a fully equipped campus in Putera Jaya Village, 5 kilometers from the Permaisuri City. This current campus location was very suitable and equipped with various basic facilities. Environment that was surrounded with peaceful villages provided conducive learning environment. Among the facilities provided were Administration and Academic Building, Theatre Hall, 3 Dormitory Blocks that can accommodate 2160 students, a prayer room, cafeteria, sport courts, multipurpose hall, computer/multimedia laboratory, nursing laboratory, hospitality complexes and many others.

Accordingly, at the first stage of phase 1, UCB had been trying to improve the infrastructure facilities to accommodate 5,000 students capacity. The facilities that had been prepared include the increase numbers of classrooms and dormitory

accommodation for students. This whole first phase construction did not use waqf fund yet as discussed.

## **SECOND PHASE**

In the second phase, UCB had made an effort to improve the existing infrastructure to accommodate the increase enrollment of students and staffs such as the increase of lecture rooms, expansion and equipment of library, hall, office space, Students Affairs Building, grocery stores, kiosks, students activities center, commercial and economic center as well as various other facilities especially for students to fulfill their needs in the context of preparing conducive environment for learning. During this phase, UCB expected the increase number on student's capacity of 10,000 people in the future. The cost of construction for this second phase will be funded through the collected of waqf fund.

The other part of collected waqf fund will be invested in various economic activities to generate income/return to UCB. Among the investment project that had been carried out by UCB was East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Development Project that involved Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang.

In fact, ECER Tourism development project, UCB had potential to involve in tourism industry like the construction of resort facilities and hotel, resort and home stay for the benefits of tourists. Terengganu will become hub activities for coast activities, cruise terminal, marina, handcraft market, shopping complex, garden and several theme parks. By 2020, ECER will attract 7.4 million foreign tourists and 21.4 million domestic tourists (<http://www.penerangan.gov.my>).

. Apart from that, ECER also paved the opportunity for UCB to spearhead Small and Medium Enterprise (IKS) by getting involved in manufacturing industry such as batik, textile, embroidered and silk. UCB also had a potential to engage in industrial sector based on palm oil, wood and rubber as well as other agricultural products to produce goods such as the production of fish products like *sata* and fish crackers (*keropok lekor*).

UCB was also involved in the modern agricultural sector that had been planned by ECER such as 2,000 hectares agropolitan project in Hulu Setiu, Terengganu which was an integration of goat and rubber farm plantation to produce precocious goats. Research and Breeding Center for Nucleus Goats in Hulu Terengganu produced 10,000 high quality breeders like *Jamnapari*, *Boer* and *Anglo Nubian* in 2015. Currently, Malaysia had imported 70,000 goats from Australia and New Zealand each year. Breed livestock research center will be built in Tersat, Kuala Berang.

For the time being, UCB has been involved in the *trigons* bee breeders to produce honey that will become a side income for UCB. Besides that, downstream projects from *trigons* bee breeders were to produce side products from *trigon* honey such as *trigons* honey propolis, propolis soap and also facial cream. The initiative that had been pursued by UCB indirectly becomes tourist attraction to visit Terengganu and one of the sources to generate revenue for the development of UCB infrastructure.

## **CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

The result of this research showed that waqf higher education still did not get widespread attention. The whole General Education Institutions still depend on funds allocated by the

government, corporate bodies, the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) or from students' learning fees. Although there had been various seminars and conventions that looked for the best approach to construct Waqf University in Malaysia, still, lots of challenges need to be faced:

Among these were, it lack of awareness and understanding among the society towards waqf. The narrow understanding on waqf that involved only land and building for general use such as the construction of mosque, school and graveyard. This tendency had been made due to the assumption that the donation of mosque, school and graveyard guarantee more hereafter rewards. This revealed that society understanding related to waqf was still bound by immovable property especially lands and buildings which gave benefit to the needy people (Razali Othman, 2013).

The weak management of waqf was an important element in all aspects especially in managing something regarding management of waqf educational institution in Malaysia. This research focused only on primary and secondary level with Islamic education background. In this case, among the challenges on the management of educational waqf property were administration, financial resources, trainers, information and marketing. This research also explained factors that hindered the development of waqf educational institution in Malaysia Ahmad Zaki Latiff et.al, 2008).

The lack of funds had resultant with operational constraints and stunted the waqf educational institution itself. This was because it required a lot of costs to run a higher education institution especially in terms of development, campus infrastructure, employee salary and facilities for students (Abu Bakar Manat, 2007).

Higher education institution (IPT) in Malaysia did not have its own assets. This can be seen through the complete dependence on government funding. Based on the 2015 budget, government had allocated RM56 billion to Ministry of Education to fund various teaching and learning programs (Sinar Harian, 2014). Apart from that, the problem faced by all the higher education institutions was the rising costs of living standards. This led to the dependency of higher education institution (IPT) throughout Malaysia on high government funding (Siti Mashitoh Mahamood, 2014).

In the midst of this turmoil, UCB intended to emerge as the first university in Malaysia that use waqf concept. UCB had the potential of planning. The establishment of higher education institution required a long-term planning to realize the institution itself besides the management aspect that became the main source for every activities of this institution. This can be seen through the efforts made by University College Bestari (UCB) to preserve that institution by using the purchase service of lot no. 3214 Mukim Tasik Setiu, Terengganu waqf land.

UCB had permanent assets in the form of 320 acres/ 128 hectares land that played an important role in determining that land development returns and potential. UCB increase the value of that waqf land to be developed with a great impact. This case showed that the broadness of UCB waqf land became a crucial element in determining the direction and progress of higher education institutions in the future.

UCB had short-term and long-term plan in capital development of waqf land sale. In accordance, the significant role and contribution of this waqf institution became a funding resource of the Muslims development will be achieved when UCB fully developed 320 hectares land with various facilities and

infrastructures. This strategic approach had a potential to increase the return from the waqf land with the gradual implementation of new scale development projects.

Those who involved in the UCB management were active and successful people in business. In order to generate return on assets of the land development, UCB can develop that strategic planning collectively by providing various services needed by the society. This service had been provided to the various social classes regardless of their race, religion and living standards. Among the development implemented was to establish house of worship, hospital, school and educational complex.

Apart from that, the development and expansion of UCB land as a source to generate revenue was by establishing units of building that consisted of business buildings such as shop, printing services, laundry, bazar, traveler accommodation, rental homes for the placement of locals and others. In addition, agricultural and livestock projects were also assets that provide attractive returns to the UCB.

In this context, the exclusive planning of UCB development was actually to fulfill the requirement of 2015 strategic budget plan with the theme "Economic Needs of the Citizens" (Utusan Online, 2014). This strategic planning had focused on the empowerment of human capital and entrepreneurship as well as the empowerment of indigenous people agenda. This plan had been carried out by UCB to help in improving socioeconomic status of the society and eventually made UCB as a Private Educational Institution that contribute towards raising the country funding.

Overall, the implementation of waqf higher education in UCB was a successful exemplary model in the future. The success

of an educational institution was not for the benefit of the students only but also for the benefit of the whole society during that time. The outstanding contribution and role of UCB institution can be a role model in order to expand waqf property of other educational institutions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Waqf had a high aesthetic value to produce an excellent and sustainable educational institution. In this context, the waqf institution should be implemented collectively besides taking care of its sustainable aspects; this mechanism should be institutionalized in a sustainable and planned manner. As a Muslim society identity, it is reasonable for us to raise the awareness by making waqf as a significant instrument in upholding the education and socioeconomic development of the Muslims. The waqf scheme of land lot in UCB had successfully proved to work without the help of government or any specific agencies. Independent concept through the development on the waqf scheme of land lot and efficient administration had successfully produced excellent graduates especially in terms of intellectual ability.

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