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Digitalization, Secularization, and the Need for Soulful Education

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Abstract

Digitization is the conversion of physical information into digital formats, converting hard paper files and documents into digital files and documents. It has many positive effects including making life easier, connecting people, spurring innovation, and helping economies develop. However, it has led to metabolic diseases caused by sedentary lifestyles, created mental health problems, augmented concerns around privacy and security, and has resulted in social isolation and reduced interactions. The digital revolution is changing the way people live and interact, but it is neither sustainable nor equitable. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization but it has also widened inequalities between and within less-connected and hyper-digitalized societies. Ensuring a more equitable global digital economy will require crafting agile government regulations, upskilling workers, and encouraging a balanced approach to life that incorporates both technology and spiritual practices. Technology should be used in a way that is aligned with one's spiritual or ethical values and beliefs. Spirituality includes a connection to something greater than oneself, a sense of purpose or meaning, and a commitment to ethical principles such as compassion, love, and respect. This can be attained through soulful education and the University with Soul.

Keywords: Digitalization, Spirituality, COVID-19, Soulful Education, Spiritual Citizenship

Introduction

People are living in a digital world. Technology has transformed the way they live, work, and communicate. With the widespread use of computers, smartphones, and the internet, their daily lives have become increasingly intertwined with digital technologies. The digital technologies include the internet of things (IoT) with next-generation telecommunication networks (e.g., 5G); big-data analytics; artificial intelligence (AI) that uses deep learning; and blockchain technology. They are highly inter-related: the proliferation of the IoT (e.g., devices and instruments) in various organisations facilitates the establishment of a highly interconnected digital ecosystem, enabling real-time data collection at scale, which could then be used by AI and deep learning systems to understand the problems at hand, model risk associations and predict outcomes. This is enhanced by blockchain technology, a back-linked database with cryptographic protocols, and a network of distributed computers in different organizations, integrating peer-to-peer networks to ensure that data are copied in multiple physical locations, with modified algorithms to ensure data are secured but traceable. People walk with mobile phones, climb social networks, pay with bank cards, and carry out online transactions. Citizens are gradually becoming "netizens", cities are slowly becoming "smart cities", and learning in schools, colleges and universities are becoming "smart learning" in digital learning environments. Books, documents, pictures and films are replaced by digitized copies accessible on-line preparing for libraries and archives to disappear. Services like the postal service, taxi service, secretaries, bank clerks are being replaced by "self-service" with the help of computer programs. Human interaction and services are vanishing.

Digitalization has exposed individuals to a wide range of perspectives and information and facilitated the global exchange of ideas, and thus contributed to the spread of secular values and norms contributing to the dilution of traditional religious influences. Admittedly, the online space brings together people with diverse religious and non-religious perspectives. This has enhanced the visibility

of religion but the debates and discussions on social media often challenges traditional religious beliefs, sometimes leading to polarization. The digital landscape has often been used to spread misinformation and promote radical views, contributing to religious tensions.

Technology is increasingly changing consumers' relationship with spirituality. Buddhists use digital devices to facilitate their spiritual rituals and community building, and Orthodox Jews broadcast spiritual activities via apps (Altmann, 2017). During the Covid-19 pandemic, spiritual seekers resorted to online spaces as they found it difficult to engage in traditional physical ceremonies. The dissemination of religious knowledge has grown alongside the rise of the Internet since 1990s. This relationship has intensified with the rise of app culture and other emerging digital technologies.

Consequently, scholars have studied the relationship between spirituality and digitalisation (Belk, 2017; Kaur, 2016; Van Laer & Izberk-Bilgin, 2019; Belk et al., 2021). Enstedt, Larsson, and Pace (2015) looked at the relationship between religion and internet. Al-Saggaf and Begg (2004) analysed the differences between online and offline communities in the Arab/Muslim world. Kamarulzaman et al. (2016) explored the role of social networks in mediating and connecting Muslim communities in their search for ḥalāl food, and how such Internet-based interactions can influence religious identity, commitment, community development, and quality of life. Campbell (2005) examines the discourses and narratives of religious internet usage. Together, this body of research shows that both the digital and the religious/spiritual are irrevocably connected in people's search "for meaningful encounters with one's inner self or a higher external power" (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019, p. 391).

Digitalisation has not been effective in promoting spirituality which is defined as "the engagement to explore – and deeply and meaningfully connect one's inner self – to the known world and Beyond" (Kale, 2004, p. 93). It is the search for meaning and purpose in life, and to endeavour to create a "meaningful connection" with one's "inner self" and the outside world. It means making a purposeful and conscious effort to bring about the ultimate unity of all being, transcending the mundane material realm. It is a quest for connection with the transcendent or metaphysical aspects of life. Spirituality as defined above does not exclude religious practices associated with traditional religious institutions. Religion, however, is a vehicle nurturing spirituality for many individuals by providing a road map to understand and express their spirituality. In Islam, spirituality is the focal point of the religion, and religious rituals are a fundamental part of an individual's relationship with Allah (SWT) (Nasr, 2013).

The impact of digitalization on religion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Digitalization has increased the visibility of religion through online communities, social media, and digital platforms that allow for the expression and sharing of religious beliefs. However, it has contributed to the spread of secularization by providing platforms for diverse voices, fostering a globalized culture, and facilitating access to information that may challenge traditional religious beliefs. How has this digitalisation affected humanity? What is the linkage between digitalisation and spirituality? How can the adverse effects of digitalisation be reversed to promote spirituality and benefit humanity?

Digitalization

Digital technology has enabled people to access information instantly, communicate with people around the globe, work remotely, and engage in social activities online. It has also opened up new avenues for education, healthcare, and business. It enables businesses to provide faster and more convenient customer services, such as online ordering, mobile apps, and real-time customer support. It also enables teams to collaborate more effectively, regardless of their location, through online collaboration tools, video conferencing, and other communication technologies. It can enhance the delivery of healthcare services through telemedicine and remote patient monitoring, increase access to care, and reduce costs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization in many areas, as people and organizations have had to quickly adapt to the challenges posed by social distancing measures. It has made many companies shift to remote work arrangements, requiring the use of digital tools and platforms for communication, collaboration, and project management. People have avoided in-person doctor visits and resorted to telemedicine as an alternative for consultations, diagnosis, and treatment. Likewise, online education has become the primary mode of learning for many students, with digital platforms

being used for teaching, assessment, and collaboration. With concerns about physical contact and the spread of the virus, contactless payments have become more popular, with the use of mobile payments and online transactions increasing.

Meanwhile, mobile applications were developed to help "track and trace" the development of the pandemic; and researchers employed artificial intelligence (AI) to learn more about the virus and accelerate the search for a vaccine. Internet traffic in some countries increased by up to 60% shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020), underscoring the digital acceleration that the pandemic sparked.

The new generation of information technology has been widely used in epidemic prevention and control, leading to the popularization of new digital formats, new models, and new applications (Ting, et al., 2020, p. 26). The epidemic has made enterprises more fully aware of the need to complete collaboration between employees and machines, machines and machines, enterprises and enterprises, and enterprises and customers to truly realize digitalization (Irawanto, 2020, p. 8).

Digitalisation has reduced reliance on manual labour and increased productivity by automating repetitive operations, streamlining processes, and improving overall efficiency, and thus contributed to economic growth. The reduction of physical resources, paperwork, and human labour has the effect of cost savings over time. The decrease in the need for paper led to less deforestation and thus reduced environmental impact.

Most importantly, digitalisation has made it possible for the employees to work from anywhere, anytime thus providing flexibility and work-life balance. This has become especially important in times of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been pointed out that digitalization has promoted globalisation as it enabled easy communication and collaboration across geographical boundaries thus fostering a more connected world.

The Debit Side of Digitalization

Digitalization has many benefits, but it has also given rise to some social problems. Generally, people are concerned about the security and protection of personal information; the proliferation of cyberbullying and online harassment, which can have severe consequences for victims, including mental health problems, social exclusion, and even suicide; and the spread of disinformation and fake news, which can undermine trust in institutions and democratic processes. At the simplest level, digitalization has created a gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. This can exacerbate existing social inequalities and lead to a lack of access to education, job opportunities, and public services for some groups.

The major disadvantage of digital technology is social evolution. It has given rise to digital addiction, with people spending excessive amounts of time on their devices, leading to social isolation, poor mental health, and reduced productivity. People do not spend their time in the real world, they feel the need to spend time virtually. In a get-together or any casual gathering, almost everyone is busy on their phones (Figure 1). The youth, in particular, have become used to living in a virtual fantasy world. Some live their lives on such social media platforms as Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram. As Sramana Mitra (July 3, 2015) pointed out:

Human beings are losing their ability to communicate in person. To smile at each other. To converse. To enjoy a meal together without looking at their smartphones. To look into each other's eyes. To touch. To honour food that someone else has cooked with love and care. To be present in the moment without interruption. This is a tremendous loss that cannot be quantified … a couple sits across from each other, heads down, typing on their smartphones. They are not communicating with each other across the table.

Figure 1. Effects of Digital Transformation

Source: freepik, https://www. freepik.com/free-vector/digital-transformation-isometric_26762100.htm

This situation was worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic by the term "social distancing." It implies steps that need to be taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus by maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come in close contact with each other. It involves keeping a distance of six feet from others and avoiding gathering in large groups. But the term "social distancing" means to avoid being social. That's unnatural for most humans. Humans are social and emotional beings. They survive and thrive by being social. It goes against human nature.   That makes using the term "social distancing" inappropriate. The International Islamic University Malaysia used the term "physical distancing" emphasizing "social bonding" (Figure 2). Social bonding is possible today because of being able to stay connected over voice and video calling. On 20 March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially changed its terminology to "physical distancing," and that's on purpose because they want people to still remain connected."
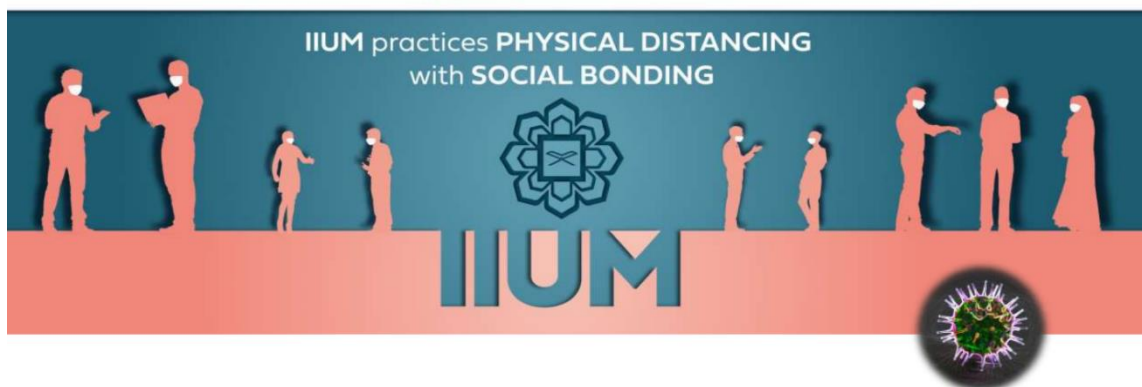

Figure 2. Poster promoting physical distancing with social bonding

Source: Courtesy of the office of the Rector, International Islamic University Malaysia

Digitalization also led to increase in the richness and wealth of the nations, also rapid consumption of natural resources, pollution of natural environment, and the disruption of the ecological balances, restricting the chances and sources for the future generations. Digital Economy" has been defined as the branch of economics studying the movement of "zero marginal cost intangible goods" over the Internet (Fournier, 2013). The report, *The Limits to Growth*, by Meadows et al. (1972), identified five global trends of great concern: increasingly fastening industrialization, rapid increase in population, widespread insufficient nutrition/famine, fast consumption of non-renewed resources, and environmental pollution. This report has been repeatedly criticized since its publication, but its warnings about the climate were alarmingly prescient.

Equally noticeable aspect of digitalization is the education system producing graduates for a world dominated by cyber-physical systems. The system emphasizes technical innovation which is part of predominantly training the mind and training to develop new things and a better economy for the innovation economy. The emphasis is on the four Ms - Manpower, Mind, and Machine, driven by the Market. The education process is reduced to knowledgeable educators who transfer information to those who do not know rather than help students formulate higher-level thinking skills on their own. The general emphasis is on developing a workforce, inventive minds, and hi-tech machines based on innovation and technological change.   The overall orientation of education in the contemporary world can be summarised in a five-letter word, WEIRD: Westernized (as per the initial Industrial Revolutions), Economic-centric, Industry-led, Reputation obsessed, and hence a Dehumanizing exercise (Dzulkifli et al., 2019). The need is to emphasise spirituality.

Islamic Spirituality

Spirituality is very much linked to Islam which places great importance on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. This includes ensuring access to food, promoting health and wellness, and caring for the environment. Therefore, it is important to situate Islam within the context of the changing world affected by food security, pandemic, and climate change.

With regard to food security, Islam encourages individuals and communities to be charitable and to share with those in need. This includes giving to organizations that work to alleviate hunger and promote sustainable agriculture. Additionally, Islam teaches the importance of using resources wisely, avoiding waste, and conserving food.

In response to the pandemic, Islam emphasizes the importance of caring for one another and protecting vulnerable populations. This includes following public health guidelines, such as social distancing and wearing masks, to prevent the spread of the virus. Islam also encourages individuals to seek medical treatment when necessary and to prioritize their own health and the health of others.

Regarding climate change, Islam emphasizes the importance of being good stewards of the environment and protecting the natural world. This includes promoting sustainable practices, such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and protecting biodiversity. Islam also teaches that humans have a responsibility to care for the earth and its inhabitants, both present and future.

Islam lays much emphasis on the purification of one's inner being, and the translation of this positive change in daily life through ritual worship and ethical conduct. The Qur'an 30:30 requires of the believers "to turn your face single-mindedly to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature (*fitrah*) on which Allah has created human beings." Thus, Allah (SWT) has embedded in every individual a predisposition, *fitrah*, geared towards having faith in One and only God, and leading a life characterized by virtuous deeds. This *fitrah* causes people to embark on spiritual journeys in pursuit of truth and the meaning of life.

Islamic spirituality is holistic in nature, addressing the needs of both the body and the soul. It encourages believers to manifest the highest ideals and virtues in their lives. According to the Qur'an, the body and the soul or the physical and the spiritual are interwoven. This is exemplified in the daily Muslim prayer which combines spiritual contemplation and bodily movements facilitating a simultaneous connection of the physical and spiritual aspects with God. The prayer serves to move physical and spiritual selves towards a deeper relationship with God. Equally noteworthy is the fact that Islam takes a balanced approach to human desires, rejecting the shaming of natural appetites for food,

drink, and intimacy. Instead, Islam acknowledges the natural human desires for food, drink, and intimacy to be enjoyed within the boundaries set by God. This integrated perspective on the body and soul promotes physical and emotional equilibrium, fostering a state of gratitude, qualities that are not only rewarded in this life but also in the hereafter.

Islamic spirituality also extends beyond personal development to encompass societal well-being. While private worship is essential for establishing sincerity with God, believers are also tasked with bringing divine consciousness into the world. This means that every Muslim should strive to emulate divine qualities in everyday interactions. They must be compassionate with others and be closer to God, who is the Most Compassionate. They must be selfless with resources just as the God is the Most Generous. They must strive to end conflict and promote peace just as the God is the source of peace. In essence, Islamic spirituality is a comprehensive approach that aims to integrate the spiritual, physical, and societal dimensions of human existence.

The development of Islamic ideas has spread online. Various sources of Islamic education, texts, teachings, and discussions are available on websites. People can access sacred texts, sermons, and spiritual guidance online. Digital platforms offer various apps and tools designed to promote mindfulness, meditation, and overall well-being. It has also created a more interconnected world, allowing people to connect with spiritual communities and teachers globally. Islamic *fatwas* (a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a legal scholar) mushroomed in the online realm that reached to about 14,000 by the year 2000 and continued to increase significantly on a yearly basis (Brockner, 2001). The Internet also brings issues related to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning by an expert in Islamic law) into sharp focus, when every individual can proclaim himself an Islamic authority, and be qualified to make statements and issue fatwas. The presence of many online *fatwas* or online *fiqh* (human understanding and practices of Islamic law) sources has become a major concern for the global community (Chawki, 2010). Islamic websites have been disseminating knowledge about various aspects of Islam but not about Islamic spirituality which requires education with a soul.

Soulful education in the world of digitalisation

Islam emphasizes education with a soul and the university with a soul. Soulful education in the world of digitalization refers to an educational approach that considers not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the development of ethical values, empathy, and emotional intelligence. This requires identifying and fostering all personal and physical dimensions of learners and their effects on the curriculum (Sierk, 2014). The common curricula, however, ignore some of the dimensions and keep a mechanistic and partial view toward human beings. The emphasis is on objective tests, standardizing knowledge and isolating students from nature (Miller, 2010, 2019). Contemporary educational programs are geared to fill students' minds with information and mental content of teachers. An ideal education, however, is the one that involves the heart and soul of students in learning process.

A soulful education tries to find ways for identifying students' talents (Nutall, 2006; Miller, 2019). Such a curriculum enables students to find out some questions about the meaning and destination of life, appreciating vitality, developing creative capacities, social evolution, and ability to pass through life's phases calmly and without tension (Nutall, 2006). Using soulful elements, such as meditation, imagination, contemplation and presence in the curriculum has many positive effects. It helps decrease teachers' and students' distress, increase concentration, and enhance safe interpersonal relations. Conversely, it would help decrease addictive and destructive behaviours, improve career, sport and educational performance, motivate, and increase creativity and positive change in the brain structure. The soul is an energy source in human beings and causes motive and vitality. When the soul is ignored, students are converted into automated robots or templates so that their minds will be inactively filled with teachers' knowledge.

Soulful education can promote responsible and ethical behaviour in the digital world, encouraging students to be respectful, honest, and responsible online. It can help students develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to evaluate information critically, identify biases, and assess the credibility of sources; encourage the development of emotional intelligence, helping students understand and manage their emotions and empathize with others, which is essential for developing healthy relationships and promoting well-being. Soulful education should foster creativity, encouraging students to use digital

tools to express themselves in unique and meaningful ways, promoting innovation and artistic expression.

Soulful education is better transmitted in a university. The university is a living body of which the soul is its essence. The university should provide knowledge not simply from the utilitarian perspective of producing technocrats, bureaucrats, and other professionals for employment but lay equal emphasis on the physical, social, and spiritual development of the individual. It must emphasize knowledge, skills, and expertise without marginalizing the spiritual and moral development of young adults. It must transmit knowledge that is based upon reason and revelation. The "university with a soul" must prioritize the development of students' values, such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility, alongside academic excellence and technical expertise. It must focus on developing students' intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual capacities, rather than just imparting technical and academic knowledge. It must prioritize values, community, and social responsibility, which are features often associated with a university with a soul.

Overall, a university with a soul in the world of digitalization can help students develop the skills and values needed to navigate the complex digital world while promoting well-being, creativity, and social connection.

The Need for Spirituality

The digital world has transformed the way people connect with others and access information. It has provided them with unprecedented access to resources and knowledge. Digital technologies can support sustainable development and open up untapped potentials in many areas, e.g. to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption. Digital platforms provide opportunities for individuals to engage in religious practices and connect with like-minded communities, provide access to a wealth of information, teachings, and resources on religion, and gave rise to virtual communities centered around religious interests. These communities have organized virtual retreats, workshops, and conferences. Participants join these events from the comfort of their homes. Live-streamed events, virtual gatherings, and online ceremonies allow individuals to participate in sacred practices remotely. These activities, however, cannot be termed spiritual.

While digital technologies offer numerous benefits, they also raise concerns that can impact the practice of Islam and the spiritual well-being of individuals. Digital devices are often the sources of distraction during Islamic rituals and prayers. Notifications, messages, and apps may interrupt moments of spiritual focus, making it challenging for individuals to maintain a sense of presence and devotion during acts of worship. People using internet are exposed to inappropriate or conflicting material, including explicit content or anti-Islamic narratives, thus posing challenges to maintaining a spiritually wholesome environment. There are also complain from religious authorities about incorrect or misinterpreted religious rulings (fatwas) leading to misguided practices, potentially impacting the understanding and application of Islamic principles. Furthermore, the internet can be a platform for the spread of extremist ideologies and misinterpretations of Islamic teachings. Online spaces may be susceptible to the dissemination of radical content that goes against the true principles of Islam.

At the same time, however, the ecological drawbacks of digitalisation are becoming increasingly evident due to the rising environmental impact of information and communication technologies. "Evil has appeared throughout the land and sea because of what the hands of mankind have created" (Al-Qur'an, 30:41). It is essential, therefore, to address these problems and ensure that digital technologies are used in a way that promotes social equity, privacy, and human well-being. It is essential to rethink science and religion from the perspective of spirituality.

There is a dire need to think of Spiritual citizenship in the digital world, to think of maintaining a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging in the digital space. It involves using technology in a way that is aligned with one's spiritual or ethical values and beliefs and contributing positively to the community. Spirituality is a personal and subjective concept and can encompass a wide range of beliefs, practices, and values. However, some common themes that may be associated with spirituality include a connection to something greater than oneself, a sense of purpose or meaning, and a commitment to ethical principles such as compassion, love, and respect. In the context of the digital world, spirituality

can be seen as a way to transcend the limitations of technology and maintain a deeper connection to ourselves and others. This may involve practices such as meditation, mindfulness, or prayer, which can help cultivate a sense of presence and awareness in the midst of digital distractions and overload.

One way to cultivate spiritual citizenship in the digital world is to approach technology as a tool for positive change. This may involve using social media platforms to raise awareness about social issues or participating in online communities that support causes we care about. By using technology in a purposeful and intentional way, we can contribute to the greater good and align our digital actions with our spiritual values.

Spiritual citizenship means being mindful of the impact of online actions, and making conscious choices that promote positivity, respect, and compassion. Before posting or sharing content online, it's important to reflect on the intention behind the actions and the potential impact they may have on people. This means being aware of one's biases, assumptions, and emotional reactions, and taking steps to avoid harmful behavior such as cyberbullying, hate speech, or spreading misinformation. This also requires shunning negativity and divisiveness, and practicing empathy and compassion to build bridges of understanding and promote harmony in the online community.

Most importantly, educational system should help develop capacities for integrity and courage, diligence and self-sacrifice, commitment and service to others, and a sense of higher purpose. Education enables individuals and societies to utilise their human capabilities for social and economic development (Machin & Vignoles, 2018). Education is a fundamental right and is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and many other international human rights instruments. The right to education is also one of the key principles underpinning the United Nations Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). SDG4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all. Education as a fundamental right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and many other international human rights instruments.   Interestingly, Article 9 of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (OIC, 1990) reads as follows:

(a) The quest for knowledge is an obligation and the provision of education is a duty for society and the State. The State shall ensure the availability of ways and means to acquire education and shall guarantee educational diversity in the interest of society so as to enable man to be acquainted with the religion of Islam and the facts of the Universe for the benefit of mankind.

(b) Every human being has the right to receive both religious and worldly education from the various institutions of, education and guidance, including the family, the school, the university, the media, etc., and in such an integrated and balanced manner as to develop his personality, strengthen his faith in God and promote his respect for and defense of both rights and obligations.

Though many Muslim and non-Muslim countries are committed to all 17 goals under the United Nations SDG 2030 and in particular SDG4, it has not adopted inclusive universal education. This has vanquished the dreams of thousands of women and children of reaping the benefits of early education.

Education is considered equitable, when educational practices, policies, curricula, and resources are representative of all students, such that each student has access to, can participate in, and make progress in high-quality learning experiences, regardless of race, socio-economic status, gender, religion, national origin and linguistic diversity (Skelton & Kigamwa, 2013). Enhancing equity in education leads to improved economic, social, and individual outcomes, as boosting the skills of every student; and increasing chances for employment and productivity (OECD, 2012).

Equity in education encompasses two closely related dimensions: equity as fairness and equity as inclusion (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007). Equity as fairness implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background do not stand in the way of educational success. Equity as inclusion means ensuring that all students achieve at least a basic minimum level of education. Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive, supporting their students to reach their learning potential without creating barriers or lowering expectations, either formal or informal. An equitable education system can offset the impact of broader social and economic inequalities. In the context of learning, it enables individuals, regardless of their background,

to reap the full benefits of education and training (Faubert, 2012; Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007).

The scope of equity in education is very wide and may extend to ensuring equitable educational practices, including classroom instructional practices, educational resources, teachers' attention, curricula, assessments, interactions, attitudes, language and institutional cultures Many countries have committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), the culture and structures of higher education institutions remain slow to change (UNESCO, 2008, p. 13).

The overall orientation of education in the contemporary world is summarised by Dzulkifli and Moten (2022) in a five-letter word, WEIRD: Westernized, Economic-centric, Industry-led, Reputation obsessed, and hence a Dehumanizing exercise. This system of education in the contemporary world needs to be replaced with a more wholesome, inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and resilient framework, WISER: Worldwide, Inclusive, Sustainable, Equitable, and thus be *raḥmatan lil 'ālamīn* (mercy to all, Figure 3). The general emphasis is on developing a workforce, inventive minds, and hi-tech machines based on innovation and technological change.

Figure 3. WEIRD and WISER

Source: Courtesy of the Office of the Rector, IIUM.

It will lead to a more just and humane world as a higher purpose of life. It must take the lead for Education 2030, focused on The World We Want to be aligned to UNESCO's Pillars of Learning for the 21st Century, namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be, and more recently, learning to become with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals (UNESCO, 2014, p. 93). Learning to become requires reimagining the strategies to realign knowledge and understanding in shaping the future of humanity and the planet.

It is also essential to find new ways to address the learning crisis and bring about a set of solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder to respond to the shocks to the world's education system. The prevalent system of education with the emphasis on four (4) Ms - Manpower, Mind, and Machine, driven predominantly by the Marketplace, has failed to solve the problems of inequity and unfairness. There is an urgent need to replace the four Ms models with four Hs to embrace the challenges of the

21st Century, as shown in Figure 4. This is a call to: (a) Broaden Manpower for employment to humanity and sympathy, a feeling of pity and sorrow toward the misfortune. Furthermore, to stand in solidarity with the vulnerable and the marginalized. (b) Complement Mind and innovation with Heart and empathy, which is an ability to understand, acknowledge, and experience the feelings of another. More so, to participate and be engaged in providing real-world support to those affected by translating knowledge into real solutions. What Futures of Education needs, therefore, is education with a soul. Education should prepare learners not only for livelihood but also for life. Namely, aspects of moral, ethical, civic, emotional skills since educational institutions are not merely about learning a subject but also about articulating ideals and recognising one's responsibilities to those ideals.
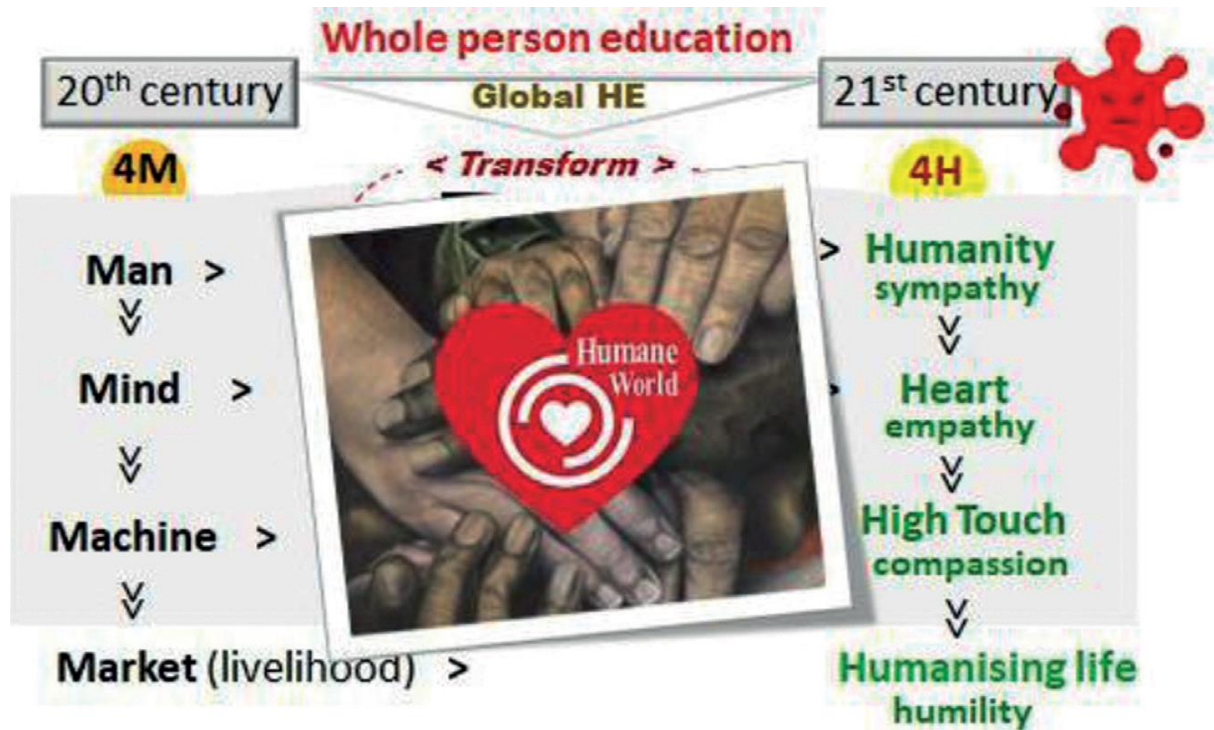

Figure 4. The whole person education characterized by 4Hs

Source: Courtesy of the Office of the Rector, IIUM.

Conclusion

Digitalization has revolutionized the way people live, work, and communicate. It has brought numerous benefits and drawbacks. Digitalization has made many tasks faster and more efficient, made many things more convenient, and has connected people from all over the world. People can now interact and collaborate with others from different countries and cultures. It has spurred innovation and created new industries and job opportunities and help economies develop. However, it has made people heavily reliant on technology, has created new concerns around privacy and security, has created addictive behaviors and made it easier for people to connect virtually leading to social isolation and reduced face-to-face interactions.

Digital platforms certainly offer a plethora of religious materials, lessons, and information giving rise to virtual communities based on shared religious interests. These communities have arranged conferences and workshops from the convenience of their homes. But these pursuits are not spiritual in the traditional sense and hence raised concerns that can impact the practice of Islam and the spiritual well-being of individuals. Addressing these challenges requires a conscious effort from individuals,

religious leaders, and the broader community to navigate the digital landscape in a manner that aligns with Islamic values and promotes spiritual well-being. This may involve digital literacy education, promoting online behavior, and fostering a balance between the benefits of digitalization and the preservation of Islamic spirituality.

In the realm of education, human interaction and well-being must be prioritized. Digital technology that enables communication, collaboration and learning across distances should not be allowed to undermine privacy, freedom of speech, informational self-determination or lead to oppressive surveillance. A shift to remote online learning has received good deal of emphasis but online learning is definitely not the best option to promote spirituality. This calls for education with soul and the university with soul. Soulful education would encourage students to be respectful, honest, and responsible online, and would promote responsible and ethical behaviour in the digital world.

As digitalization becomes more pervasive, the need for spiritual citizenship becomes more pressing. Spiritual citizenship refers to the idea of using digital platforms and technology in a way that is consistent with one's religious or spiritual beliefs. It refers to the ways in which individuals and communities practice and internalise their faith within the context of digital technologies and the online environment. People should respect their moral and spiritual values as they navigate the digital sphere. Spiritual citizenship entails avoiding actions that can go against spiritual principles, encouraging constructive interactions, and being aware of the effects of one's online actions. It entails promoting social justice, environmental responsibility, encouraging a healthy online community, and creating a space where people feel free to express their opinions while respecting those of others.

Spiritual citizenship can provide a framework for ethical decision-making that prioritizes human values and well-being. It can cultivate compassion and empathy, leading to more positive interactions and relationships. Spiritual citizenship can provide a sense of meaning and direction, helping people navigate the digital world with intention and purpose. It can foster a sense of community and connection, helping people feel more connected to others and the world around them.

In conclusion, digitalization has brought both benefits and drawbacks. While digitalization has made many tasks faster, more efficient, and more convenient, it has also created new concerns around privacy, security, addiction, and social isolation. As digitalization becomes more pervasive, the need for spiritual citizenship becomes more pressing. Islamic spirituality can provide a framework for ethical decision-making, cultivate compassion, provide a sense of purpose, and foster a sense of community in a digital world.

Suggesting spirituality is not to belittle digitalisation but rather to encourage a balanced approach to life that incorporates both technology and spiritual practices. Incorporating spiritual practices into our daily lives can help us to cultivate a deeper sense of connection with ourselves, others, and the world around us. Spirituality can help us to develop a more holistic perspective on the world, one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all things and recognizes the importance of values such as compassion, empathy, and kindness. By cultivating these qualities, we can become more responsible and ethical users of technology and contribute to creating a more harmonious and sustainable world.

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