

Workshops and Conferences

Islamization of Curriculum

The Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences organized a workshop on Islamization of Curriculum on 4 February 1995. The purpose of the workshop was to clarify the concepts of the Islamization process and also to review the programme development and curriculum revision exercises of the three different departments of the Kulliyah. The workshop was jointly organized by the International Islamic University Malaysia and the International Institute of Islamic Thought.

The Rector of the University, Dr. °AbdulḤamīd AbūSulaymān, made a groundbreaking presentation about the rationale for the Islamization of curriculum. He perceived Islamization of knowledge as a process of moving towards a progressing target, a way of thinking that continuously adapts to the changing situation. He asserted that we first need to recognize the problems of the ummah. He mentioned that the western reformists had been successful, in that they had adopted a new way of thinking and their reform was methodical. The challenge for the Muslim intellectuals is to produce a balanced Muslim personality while ensuring scientific achievements. In order to achieve Islamization at IIUM, the first prerequisite is to Islamize the curricula of IIUM. Five tools can be used to Islamize the syllabi: access to divine revelation which needs to be understood within the time-space context; acquiring knowledge about the intrinsic nature (*fitrah*) of things; acquiring knowledge about the reality and culture of things; reasoning ability to arrive at conclusions; and adopting from the western civilization what is beneficial. He maintained that the students of IIUM should master both the western and Islamic intellectual heritage.

Prof. Dr. Mohd. Kamāl Hassan, Deputy Rector, IIUM described the process of Islamization of knowledge at IIUM as it progressed in three

phases. In the first phase of 1983-89, the University had two faculties of law and economics, which were primarily concerned with professional training. Both the kulliyyahs required their students to take courses from the Center for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK) aimed at producing a holistic Islamic world-view.

In the second phase of 1989-1994, an impetus for Islamization was felt when the faculty of the Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (IRKH) was established as a pioneering experiment. It was like a new venture without any ready-made material. It was conceived as an ongoing process. Some of the constraints observed were that the faculty belonged to some well-established schools of thought; experts from different disciplines had varying approaches; and skepticism was shown about Islamization of social sciences. There was a need to do away with neocolonialist baggage and to adopt a fresh perspective of integration. There is an apparent tension between the need for preserving tradition which is somehow sacred and the need to address ourselves to the issues of change and *ijtihād*. The third phase we have recently entered in which the integration is to be pursued through systematic efforts of methodological innovation.

Prof. Kamal Hassan proposed a number of steps to be pursued in the strategic achievement of the goals of Islamization of knowledge. These were spelled out as: establishment of a committee in each kulliyyah for Islamization of knowledge; organization of interdisciplinary seminars; development of a mechanism to familiarize academic staff with *tafsīr* and revelation, emphasis on Islamization in post-graduate studies, injecting Islamic values among students without compromising professional content, adopting Islamic work ethics; and conducting research projects related to the Islamization of knowledge.

In the second part of the workshop, the departments of Political Science, Islamic Revealed Knowledge, and Education presented reports about the progress they have made in Islamization of curriculum.

It was stated that the department of Political Science considered that the driving philosophy for Islamization was that knowledge is a composite, integrated whole, and cannot be subjected to the dichotomy of spiritual and temporal realms. The study of Political Science from an Islamic perspective requires an examination of the traditional political science discipline and its methodology for its review in order to generate viable concepts and theories on the basis of insights rooted in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The department furnished its report by using the two dimensions of teacher and taught. The curriculum contents, examination questions, teaching methods, and individual contributions of the faculty were the primary focus of the presentation. It was reported that within the first five years of the establishment of department, the objectives and curriculum content have been fully revised. While providing a foundation for knowledge in political science from an Islamic perspective the students are given the option to specialize in one of following three areas: comparative politics, international relations, and political theory.

The department reported significant achievements in the design of course content, teaching methodologies, and professional contributions of the faculty. Some of the problems hindering the process included inadequate amount of time available to the faculty for research, paucity of literature, and shortage of staff.

The second report pertained to the department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. The department, established in 1990, had as its antecedent, the Center for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK) which served as a service unit for the kulliyahs of Laws and Economics. At that stage Islamization was being pursued by using a comparative approach instead of the integrative model adopted after the creation of an independent kulliyah. In the new setup the department was supposed to serve as the core of the university while other disciplines were to function as satellites. In this context the classification of knowledge in revealed and human domains created an ultimate state of flux in their endeavors to Islamize knowledge, transforming its role from being a guardian of traditional knowledge to that of a creative *mujaddid*.

Based on these notions, the need was felt to develop the curricula from a fresh perspective. In August 1993, five committees were formed for restructuring the existing programme and developing the curricula. The work of the committees was considered as vital for the complete realization of the process of Islamization at this stage. After extensive deliberations spanning one year, the committees were able to develop a total package of BIRKH programmes in the five areas: Contemporary Islamic thought & *Uṣūl al-dīn*, Qur'ān and *tafsīr*, *Fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *Hadīth*, and Comparative religion.

In August 1994, the department formed four units headed by coordinators in the areas of culture and thought, *Uṣūl al-dīn* and Comparative religion, *Tafsīr* and *Hadīth*, *Fiqh* and *Uṣūl al-fiqh*. The coordinators formed committees in their areas to develop courses in MIRKH, and advanced courses for Ph.D. programmes. Many problems

faced in the process had to do with the novelty of the idea of IRKH itself. This was because for the first time an institution of higher learning tried to venture in establishing a discipline which is entrusted with the idea of integrating human knowledge within the Islamic framework under the guidance of revealed knowledge criteria. It meant that Islamic sciences would go through the process of contemporarization whereas the criteria of revealed knowledge would serve as the principles of watchfulness or verification of the process of Islamization in other disciplines. Another problem emanates from the bilingual character of the Department. Some members in the department come from a tradition holding the view that Arabic is a "holy" language. This position handicaps most of them from assuming the role of a confident Islamizer. The faculty members of the department have made substantial contributions in the form of books, articles and seminar papers.

The department also spelled out its agenda for further development to realize the objectives of Islamization. It places a higher degree of emphasis on the need of interreligious dialogue. Another area of interest is to focus on studies dealing with the theoretical framework of civilization that would give a clear understanding of the meaning of civilizational development from an Islamic perspective. The Department wishes to conduct an intensive review of Islamic thought and contemporary philosophies and ideologies, particularly as these affect Malaysian Muslim society and its part in Vision 2020. A clear emphasis was also noted on methodic and metamethodic courses to achieve the goals of Islamization in the Department of IRKH and the university as a whole. Special attention to empirical methods was also called for to bridge the gap between the traditional emphasis on historical and textual methods and the growing interest in applied methods.

The last report was presented by the department of Education. The department started a diploma programme in 1987 and the Master's of Education was added in the year 1990. The philosophy of the university has provided direction to the department in its efforts of Islamization. The department has conceived the objective to develop and refine the Islamic concept and system to be capable of producing successive generations of Muslims who not only totally submit to the will of Allah but are also knowledgeable and skillful in specific areas of life. This is reflected in the statements of objectives of the department and the programmes it offers.

The curricula of both the diploma and master's degree programmes have integrated Islamic perspectives in explicit or implicit ways. The

Ta'āruf and *°Ibādah* camp activities of the diploma students are aimed at developing leadership capabilities by integration of faith and action. Additionally the students also participate in other programmes designed to promote the understanding of Islamic teaching and its relevance to life.

Each report was followed by a question and answer session. The discussions focused on the orientation of "Islamization" as an ideology or a process. A consensus emerged that it provides a framework for an evolutionary process. The evaluation exercise, criteria, and products were also critically examined. The need for definition of the basic terms and concepts in each discipline was also highlighted. Some methodological aspects were examined and a particular emphasis was placed on the use of empirical method. The need for value inculcation among students through appropriate strategies was also highlighted.

The day-long discussions resulted in a firm resolve expressed through the following line of action:

The departments should prepare books of readings and textbooks addressing the basics in each discipline for nonspecialists.

Intensive courses should be offered in different specializations for nonspecialists.

3. Interdisciplinary discussions should be organized at the university level.
4. The system for advising should be streamlined and workshops on advising should be organized.
5. Crosslisted courses should be jointly taught by lecturers from the concerned departments.
6. The IIIT should appoint a committee to formulate criteria for evaluating various disciplines.

Systematic studies need to be conducted to find out the impact of Islamization of knowledge on both faculty and students.

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