

The Experience of Islamization of Knowledge at the International Islamic University Malaysia: Successes and Challenges

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Abstract

From its establishment in 1983, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has been committed to the integration of Islamic values with the modern fields of knowledge. This constitutes the core of IIUM's vision and mission. The purpose of this study was to analyze the experience of Islamization of knowledge at IIUM. It involved interviews with a total of eleven key scholars at IIUM who have been active in the Islamization of knowledge and in the management of the university. Interview data were supplemented by document analysis of course outlines university strategic planning documents, seminar and conference proceedings, as well as secondary literature. Contrary to the misgivings of many critics of the Islamization project, IIUM has scored several successes. Many areas still need to be improved though. Among the most important findings are those related to the quality and readiness of both the teachers and students to contribute to Islamization of knowledge in their research and publications. Future directions should include conducting research to find solutions for the problems facing Muslim societies in particular and humanity in general. Findings from those studies will be the basis for Islamized textbooks and other teaching materials.

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Introduction

From its establishment in 1983, IIUM has been committed to the integration of Islamic values with the modern fields of knowledge.¹ This later became the core of its vision and mission. Today, Islamization and integration of knowledge have emerged as the niche areas that distinguish IIUM from other universities in Malaysia and in other parts of the world. Indeed, it is safe to claim that until now, IIUM is the world leader in Islamization and integration of knowledge. The mission of Islamization and the way it has been immortalized by being made the core of the vision and mission of IIUM are heartwarming for the Ummah. However, the problem is that very often ideals and realities are not the same. To what extent has the mission of Islamization been actualized at IIUM?

Literature related to the experience of Islamization of knowledge at IIUM and elsewhere can be classified into four major categories. The first category includes studies dealing with the concept of Islamization and laying out plans on how it should be implemented, as well as responses to such plans by way of improving of the concept or refuting it. Such works include the works of al-Attas² and their elaboration by Wan Mohd Nor³, the Islamization project of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi⁴ and its elaboration and modification by Abd al-Hamid Abu Sulayman,⁵ Taha Jabir al-Alwani⁶, Louay Safi⁷ and others in the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). The Second category of studies is related to reports on the progress of the Islamization project in a particular discipline, such as sociology⁸, or at a particular institution, such as IIUM, or country, such as Malaysia and Egypt⁹. The third category includes critical reviews of the concept and implementation of Islamization¹⁰. The final category includes syntheses of literature and on Islamization¹¹. Most of the above works focused on the concept rather than on the successes and failures of Islamization.¹²

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to fill that gap by analyzing the experience of Islamization of Knowledge at IIUM. Specifically, it focused on identifying the various approaches to Islamization employed by different individuals and groups in their Islamization efforts, the factors that supported them in this process, their level of satisfaction with the results of Islamization at IIUM, as well as their specific wishes pertaining to the future direction of this endeavor at IIUM. It specifically aimed to answer the following questions: What approaches to Islamization of knowledge are prevalent at IIUM? What

achievements, in the area of Islamization, are the IIUM scholars most proud of? What aspects of Islamization need to be improved? Why? What must IIUM do to ensure that it fully realizes the Islamization aspects in its vision and mission?

The results of the study are expected to be useful for the IIUM top leadership in that they will see how far the vision and mission have been achieved. They will understand the factors that are favorably viewed by the scholars as well those considered to be hindrances to the full achievement of the mission. With this knowledge, crucial adjustments can be made both at the strategic and tactical levels of the university's management to ensure that the mission is fully implemented. The Academic staff will benefit from the findings as they will get a clearer idea of what Islamization is all about, how the experts are doing it, and the suggestions they give for making it more effective. The findings, especially the new directions suggested by the respondents, if adopted by IIUM, will ensure that students will get a better experience of Islamization in the future. It is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to the formulation of new guidelines for Islamization.

Methodology

The study involved interviews with a total of eleven key scholars at IIUM. All the scholars have been active in the Islamization of knowledge and many of them have been (some still) involved in the management of the university at the highest levels. As expected, different scholars answered the questions in their own ways. Generally, their descriptions were profound and rich with experiences. Interview data were supplemented by document analysis of course outlines university strategic planning documents, seminar and conference proceedings, as well as secondary literature.

The data from the interviews and document analysis were analyzed using the qualitative approach of phenomenology¹³. This involved going through the information and trying to categorize the experiences of the respondents as well as what we noted in document analysis into themes. Six themes emerged from the analysis. These are: 1) History of the concept of Islamization and phases of its implementation at IIUM; 2) Stories of successful Islamization at IIUM; 3) Aspects of Islamization at IIUM which need to be improved; 4) Local and global factors which are bound to facilitate the process of Islamization; 5) Local and global factor

which will likely make Islamization more difficult than it has been before; and 6) Suggestions for making the process of Islamization of knowledge at IIUM more effective and productive.

Experiences of Islamization at IIUM

The main findings of this study can be categorized into: background of Islamization and its history at IIUM; examples of the successful implementation of Islamization; aspects in need of improvement; aspects of the global and local environments which are conducive to the mission of Islamization; local and global environmental factors which make the mission of Islamization harder; and suggestions for improvement.

Background and history of Islamization of Knowledge at IIUM

Many of the respondents expressed the feeling that we cannot properly understand what has been done at IIUM as far as Islamization is concerned, without having a clear historical perspective. Islamization at this university has meant different things to different people and different aspects of it have been emphasized at different times. The concept of Islamization, phases of its implementation at IIUM, different approaches to Islamization, and the current situation.

The Concept of Islamization of Knowledge

Different conceptions of Islamization have co-existed at IIU. Some of the scholars at IIUM follow the approach of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas which focused on liberating the Muslims from the grip of secularism. This approach was mainly used and propagated at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) from its inception in 1989 until it became an integral part of IIUM in 2002. The most widespread approach, however, which held sway at IIUM during its formative years was that espoused by al-Faruqi, Abu Sulayman, al-Alwani and in the IIIT. This approach has been modified in response to criticisms, and various versions of it have co-existed and continue to co-exist at IIUM. As the Rector of IIUM from 1988 to 1998, Dr. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman was instrumental in popularizing his own version of the IIIT approach to Islamization. According to many of the respondents, Abu Sulayman mainly emphasized the practical aspects of Islamization rather than formulating a neat logical/theoretical framework. Part of Abu Sulayman's pragmatic approach was the establishment of the Kulliyah

of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, which was designed to spearhead the process of Islamization at IIUM. According to one of the respondents, however, the results were less than satisfactory. After ten years of serious work, Abu Sulayman came to the conclusion that his approach to Islamization may not be very effective at the university level. To change the ummah, it would be more effective to focus on early childhood education. This was a significant shift from Islamization of knowledge *per se* to Islamization of humans.¹⁴

Abu Sulayman's successor as Rector of IIUM, Professor Tan Sri Muhammad Kamal Hassan, in addition to changing the nomenclature of the process from Islamization to Islamicization, is also of the view that the focus of Islamicization should be on producing Muslim professionals who live in accordance with the *al-'aqi>dah*, *as-shari>'ah*, and *al-akhla>q al-kari>mah*. Knowledge is only one part of this process. Our emphasis should be on helping young Muslims to acquire useful knowledge (*'Ilm na>fi*) which leads to moral action and good behavior (*husnul khuluq*). To him, that is the embodiment of the entire mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who made it clear that "*Innama> bu'ithu liutammima maka>rima al-akhla>q* (I was indeed sent to perfect good morals)." Clearly in agreement with this concept is one of the respondents, who argues that,

The most important issue is the presence and absence of elements of *i>ma>n* and *taqwa*, which are essential elements of the Islamic paradigm. Are we talking of Islamization of knowledge or Islamization of people, both students and teachers?

Phases of implementation

In the original concept of IIUM, the mission of Islamization was only implied and not openly stated. The original purpose, according to Professor Tan Sri Muhammad Kamal Hassan, was to produce competent Muslim professionals who are excellent in their fields and at the same time having a good Muslim character. This was taken into consideration in the planning of the departments and curriculum of the university. The core of Islamization efforts at IIUM was the establishment of the Center for Fundamental Knowledge which served as a service center for the other faculties. It was responsible for imparting knowledge of languages and

the various disciplines of Islamic revealed knowledge as well as for organizing character development programs.

According to one of the respondents, who was among the first batch of economics students at IIUM, although there was no political talk about Islamization during the first years of IIUM's existence, the lecturers tried hard to infuse Islamic values and perspectives in whatever they thought. All assignments and examination questions included either a comparison of the western and Islamic views or the attempt to infuse Islamic values in western theories and approaches. This motivated many of the students to independently continue pursuing an integrative approach after graduation. This phase, unfortunately, lasted for only around five years (1983-1988).

The next phase was under the leadership of Dr. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman (1988-1998). Abu Sulayman's focus was not directly on the students and their character but on knowledge, particularly the humanities and the social sciences. Thus, among his first projects at the university was the establishment of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. This was an unprecedented arrangement, bringing together western-trained Muslim scholars of the humanities and social sciences and experts of Islamic disciplines mostly trained in Muslim countries. It was hoped that they would gradually engage in debates leading to a 'cross-fertilization' of ideas.

Tan Sri Professor Muhammad Kamal Hassan made Islamization less of a political process and more academic in nature.¹⁵

Although he personally prefers a certain concept and model of Islamization, he is of the view that this is not revealed knowledge but a matter of personal *ijtihad*. It can be discussed and debated, but it must not be imposed on anyone. This has given the scholars at IIUM to follow any approach to Islamization that suits them.

During the above phases of Islamization, IIUM has scored many successes, making it one of the most progressive Muslim institutions of higher education. There are of course, many aspects which need to be improved to achieve better results. Respondents have noted with concern the changing political, economic, and social circumstances both in Malaysia, in the Muslim world, as well as worldwide, some of which are in favor of the process of Islamization, while others are not.

Islamization Successes at IIUM

Most of the respondents proudly noted that success has been achieved in a number of important areas of Islamization. These include: the vision and mission of IIUM, highly qualified academicians, Islamized curriculum, students, and research and publications.

IIUM's Mission and Vision

Among the greatest achievements of Islamization at IIUM is that it is the core of the vision and mission of the university. This makes it clear to all students, scholars, administrative staff, and outsiders that Islamization is important for us. The commitment of the university management to this mission has been noted by all the respondents as crucial in their experience of Islamization. The university management provides scholars and students with all the necessary resources and opportunities for the implementation of Islamization. That the university senate is emphatic on the integration of Islamic values in all program proposals, course outlines, theses and dissertations and submitted to it is one of the manifestations of this commitment. Moreover, in the evaluation of the research output of academic staff for purposes of promotion, contribution to Islamization is one of the aspects considered.

Capable and Skilled Academicians

The university has managed to attract or train high quality Muslim academicians from Malaysia and other parts of the Muslim world. A large percentage of the scholars at IIUM are qualified at the PhD level. Many of the scholars interviewed in this study expressed that they have found it useful to be able to interact with others who are qualified in areas other than their own. The arrangement at KIRKHS, which is now practiced in the other Kulliyahs and Institutes, whereby scholars from the Islamic studies background interact with their colleagues from the social sciences, has been very useful. Those with a background in Islamic Heritage and Arabic language have gained some knowledge about current theories and practices in the humanities and social sciences. Similarly, those with a humanities social science background have gained knowledge about aspects of Islam that are related to their specializations. Speaking of the Kulliyah of Economics, one of the respondents said the following:

We have to use division of labor. Some people have to master the heritage while trying to understand its applications to solve contemporary problems. Others have to master their specializations, but at the same time knowing their philosophical backgrounds, history, and fundamental assumptions. Then the two can sit together and Islamize the area. Different people in different disciplines will interact and exchange ideas and philosophies. So there is a cross-fertilization of ideas. Another possibility is to create bridges by having cross-specialization. We now have people who combine various disciplines with advanced knowledge of Islamic studies. . . . With this growing number of cross-specialized individuals, who know the philosophies of Islam and the west, we hope they will give a major push to Islamization

Curriculum

Including Islamization in all programme learning outcomes, course-contents, and evaluation methods for all programs and courses has made Islamization the main feature of most programs at IIUM. Islamization is now recognized by the Malaysian government as well as by employers as the niche of IIUM programs. It is a very important aspect of the curricula of the different Kulliyahs and departments at IIUM. A number of approaches are used for this purpose. First is the comparative approach, whereby in the same program, different courses deal with the Islamic and western perspectives. The second approach is integrative, whereby in the same course, the Islamic and western perspectives are taught side-by side. In this approach, the assignment and examination for these courses will involve both western and Islamic perspectives. This is the ideal, which is rarely used. The third approach is mainly used in the technical and professional courses which have no philosophical presuppositions. In this case, focus is not on the course contents but rather on inculcating a positive Islamic character among students.

In its efforts to islamize the curriculum the university has established a Department of General Studies under KIRKHS whose task is teaching the compulsory Islamic worldview courses to all students in the university regardless of their specialization. The intention is that every student who graduates from IIUM should have a certain level mastery of the fundamentals of the worldview and the ethics and morality of Islam. In addition to this, students are also required to take several co-curricular programs designed to inculcate a positive Islamic character in them.

One of the outstanding features of the curriculum of IIUM, which many of the respondents considered very positive, is the system of allowing students to pursue a double degree. This involves students majoring the social sciences taking IRK as a minor. After completing the first degree, they can then take remaining courses in an additional year of study after which they graduate with two degrees, one in IRK and another in human sciences, economics, etc. Through this system IIUM has produced “hybrid” Muslim scholars who will bring the mission of Islamization to the next level. Referring to this, one of the respondents said the following:

In Kulliyah of Economics we have this double degree program. Our students take double degree in Economics and management and IRK. Unlike IRK students, Economics students are generalists. They take courses from *Us}u>ludin* and *Qur'a>n and Sunnah* and *Fiqh and Us}ul al-Fiqh*. These in the future will be well prepared for the task of Islamization.

Students

Over the years, IIUM has produced many committed graduates who are starting to have an impact in various countries. Many of them graduated with double degrees, some of them after earning postgraduate degrees. Their impact is starting to be felt at IIUM and other institutions in the Muslim world. Interestingly, even ordinary students, who appeared not to be very committed to Islam, are having some positive influences on their societies. A good example of the latter group are the students from the Balkan states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, and Albania. In a study of the IIUM students from the Balkans, Nik Ahmad Hisham et al. reported the following:

There are cases where students from the IIUM campus influence their parents when they visit their home countries during the university break. The parents find that the changes that their sons and daughters bring from Malaysia are the true teachings of Islam. Here, students seem to have acted as a catalyst for change, especially in the society where Islam is separated from people's daily lives.¹⁶

Research and Publications

IIUM scholars have developed expertise in producing Islamic solutions for current problems faced by Muslim societies. Among the greatest achievements are those in the areas of Islamic economics, finance, banking, and insurance. IIUM scholars are now recognized worldwide and are sought as experts and consultants in other areas where they have made breakthrough innovations in the legal field, especially in the areas of shari'ah, family, criminal and commercial laws.

Many of the respondents stated that they are motivated by the facilities, the incentives, and encouragement given by the university, which gives extra rewards for those who conduct Islamization research. The presence of many experts of various disciplines is another encouraging factor. A researcher can easily get expert Islamic opinion whenever needed. Sometimes researchers from the social sciences collaborate with those from Islamic disciplines in their projects.

Another encouraging trend in research is the work of graduate students. A good number of masters and Ph.D. students who received their first degrees at IIUM are qualified in the Islamic as well as in the modern disciplines. By virtue of this they can, with proper guidance, conduct research that integrates the Islamic and western perspectives on the issues. They can, by virtue of their background, conduct research to explore and present unique Islamic solutions for the problems faced by humankind today. This potential, however, has only been minimally utilized.

Areas in Need of Improvement

In spite of the above successes, several weaknesses in the implementation of Islamization have to be considered. These are related to the preparedness, understanding, and commitment of IIUM academic staff to the mission of Islamization, the character and backgrounds of the students, the curriculum, research and publications.

Teaching Staff

Today, the majority of IIUM scholars are not proficient in Islamic revealed knowledge and Arabic language, both of which are crucial for effective Islamization of knowledge. This is complicated by the apparent lack of commitment to the mission of Islamization by many of the academicians. According to some of the respondents, system of 'cross-fertilization' of

ideas is not working very well. For instance, the Diploma courses in IRK and HS which were intended to equip IIUM scholars from the HS and IRK backgrounds with the knowledge and tools to enable them contribute to Islamization, seem to be declining in popularity. Hence many western educated academicians do not know much about Islam and many of the graduates of Islamic institutions are ignorant of modern sciences. About this lack of knowledge and the resultant lack of confidence, one of the respondents made the following comments:

The problem to me is the lecturers. How can people teach Islamized subjects when they are not comfortable with their knowledge of Islam? There must be a system to expose western trained lecturers to Islamic heritage. In the 1980s when I was a student in Kulliyah of Economics, the lecturers tried hard to integrate the Islamic views in everything. Every topic included a critical review of the western theories. Of course we did a lot of injustice to the west, but there was this zeal. The exam papers all had Islamic questions. In the 1990s a dichotomy was created. A few lecturers focused on the Islamic aspects while others taught pure western models with nothing to do with Islam. So we have economists vs. Islamic economists. Even students are divided. When I came back after completing my Ph.D. we examined the question papers. There is a point when questions changed from integrating Islamic and western perspectives to pure economic. There should be some sort of house training to expose all lecturers to Islamic heritage. We have to make them confident of their knowledge.

According to many of the respondents, most of the academicians do not understand the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the modern disciplines. The result of this is that those who are committed to Islamization often end up with half-cooked Islamization, sometimes using verses of the holy Qur'an to inadvertently justify theories which are opposed to the basic teachings of Islam. In the words of one of the respondents:

Most of the scholars are not really qualified for the task . They have not really mastered their disciplines. Most of them graduate with superficial knowledge and do not work on

making it deeper. They don't know the history and civilization of the west or the historical and philosophical backgrounds of their disciplines.

The Curriculum

The absence of Islamized materials and textbooks is a major hindrance to the implementation of Islamization. When courses are taught by those who are not confident with Islamic knowledge, which is the case most of the time, chances are that the Islamic texts may not receive the kind of treatment they deserve. According to one of the respondents, "what we have now is a hodgepodge of Islamic and secular (western) ideas. We are producing confused graduates." To rectify this situation, another respondent suggested the following solution:

We should invert faruqi's 12 point program and start with producing Islamized textbooks. What we are facing is that teachers who have no Islamic background are asked to teach Islamized knowledge. Someone has to prepare for them materials which they can then use in their courses.

Students

The increasing number of students is making the implementation of Islamization at IIUM quite challenging. With tens of thousand of students from hundreds of countries, IIUM is trying to do the impossible: i.e., ensuring that the mission of Islamization reaches them all. Considering the knowledge side of Islamization, more and more students enroll in IIUM today without knowing even the basics of Islam. Many do not seem to have the desire and commitment to acquire an Islamic character. Given the increasingly competitive higher education market, it is becoming increasingly difficult for IIUM to be selective.

Research and Publications

Putting aside IIUM's successes in the areas of economics and laws, there seems to be little success in Islamization in other kulliyahs, especially the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. The latter is especially significant, given the fact that it was specifically established to be the prime mover of Islamization at IIUM.

Without original research, it is difficult to create a new Islamic orientation and even to write textbooks. According to one of the respondents:

You cannot look for what is not there. If you want to know what is being done on Islamization at this university, nothing has been done. [For example], nothing new has been done on Islamization of sociology. We have to rethink the problems.

With the exception of the work being done at Kulliyah of Laws and Kulliyah of Economics, no attempts have been made to find Islamic solutions for current human or ummatic problems. According to one of the respondents, even the work being done at the Kulliyah of Economics is not yet up to the desired level:

What we are seeing is not genuine Islamization. There are many critics. What is happening is that a need was noticed and people went in to satisfy that market demand. It is a short-term solution based on the availability of systems and institutions. What was done is to make them compatible with the sharia. It does not involve a fundamental re-evaluation of the basics which are un-Islamic. Some critics have suggested that it should be called sharia compliant banking or insurance. The term Islamic is misleading. It misses the core of Islamization - the fundamentals, the world view.

In most cases, however, Islamization is still stuck in theory. Some of the respondents have attributed this mental paralysis to lack of freedom of expression. To them when there are things which cannot be written about, peoples' minds become frozen and their creativity gets stifled. According to one of the respondents, Prof. Saiyad Fareed:

You cannot be creative when someone is telling you what to say and how to say it. In Muslim countries we do not have the freedom essential for scientific research. Muslim scholars have more freedom in America, the UK, and other western countries. How can we have a viable education system without freedom of speech?

The mission of Islamization and the way it is often misunderstood and misrepresented by some people may aggravate this problem. Unlike

making simple academic mistakes, when Islamization is involved it becomes very scary. A mistake may make one appear un-Islamic, less-Islamic, or even an outright heretic. At the end it is safer to either do no research at all, or in case one does research, to deal with what is familiar and avoid testing any limits. But, as one respondents noted, all significant discoveries lie at the frontiers of knowledge.

Opportunities and Challenges

Most of the respondents are of the view that today there are many opportunities for Islamization of the social sciences. Some of these opportunities arise from global trends in the social sciences while others are presented by the local environments in many Muslim countries which are becoming more aware of and supportive of Islamization efforts.

On the global social science scene, a number of respondents observed that many social scientists are beginning to realize, accept, and emphasize that there is no single correct approach to any social phenomenon, and that every social scientists is obliged to take into consideration the cultural peculiarities of his subjects. This has given rise to the approach of multiculturalism which is now emphasized in management, psychology, education, etc. For any approach to be valid, it has to be made suitable to the culture in question. A little extension of this brings us to Islamization. All theories and approaches have to be made suitable to the worldview of Islam before they can be applied to Muslims. Since the Islamic perspectives on many social phenomena have not yet been formulated, the multicultural approach will be an added push for many to venture into Islamization. The disadvantage of this is that some scholars may only stop at considering cultural Islam, while not working enough to master the core fundamental principles of the worldview of Islam. Nevertheless, this atmosphere is a good encouragement for professionals who have been on the fence, considering Islamization work not to be really professional. Moreover, in many parts of the Muslim world, there is growing awareness of and receptiveness for Islamized approaches and products. For instance, many Muslim countries are beginning to implement Islamic elements in their financial and legal systems.

Nevertheless, the realization of Islamization at IIUM is currently facing significant challenges. The first challenge is the so called “war on terror” which has produced mixed results for Muslim institutions. Although

many people in the west became interested to know about Islam and Islamic perspectives on different things, Muslims are under pressure not to appear too Islamic. Under such pressures, many Muslim who could have made good contributions to Islamization may find it difficult. Moreover, the rhetoric on terrorism and terrorism breeding-grounds may scare some students and scholars from pro-USA Muslim countries from joining institutions like IIUM which are clearly Islamic.

Locally, there are several developments which may not be very good for Islamization in the long run. Among the issues considered by respondents to be threats to Islamization are the following: the problem of unemployed graduates, emphasis on science and technology, quality assurance systems, and the ranking of universities. Many people, both in the government and outside, are now focusing on the marketability of courses offered by the universities. Programs like Islamic Revealed Knowledge are by their nature not directly marketable. The outcome of this is that students in the human sciences, who were to take a minor in IRK, are now interested in minors in other areas like education, science, etc. This shift has positive and negative implications for Islamization. The challenge now is for the Islamization committees in the various Kulliyahs to convince good students to take the minor in Islamic Revealed Knowledge. One of the respondents commented on this issue as follows:

Many things are changing now. I understand that Human Sciences students no longer have to take a minor in revealed knowledge. They have more choices now. This defeats the mission of integration. Some people argue that those who take Islamic subjects are over loaded.

Related to this is the government's new policy of having 60% of all students in the science stream and 40% in the arts stream. Although that is a good direction for the national economy, many respondents expressed fears that it might spell doom for Islamization. This is because the best students will join the sciences, and only students who are not very competent will be left for the arts. In the arts, many students are likely to opt for professional courses in economics and the laws and only the remainder will go to IRKHS. Remainders cannot make good Islamizers. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, when they join HS, they are

likely to opt for minors in areas other than IRK. This makes the future of Islamization bleak indeed.

Moreover, the renewed emphasis on marketability of programs means that it will be more difficult to develop new Islamized human science programs, for which the market is limited. One of the respondents summarized this situation as follows:

At present there is a challenge posed by the government and ministry of higher education. There is much talk about unemployed graduates and the requirement to have 60% of all students in science courses and only 40% in arts. This will definitely affect the Islamic revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences programs. To what extent can we continue emphasizing Islamization under these circumstances?..... Unfortunately, the officials in the government are looking at numbers. They are interested in things like the number of credit hours a person must have in a field to be considered specialized in it.

All these challenges, together with the opportunities mentioned before, mean that for it to survive, the mission of Islamization of Knowledge has to be approached in a new way. In the next section the suggestions given by the respondents are presented.

The way forward for Islamization of Knowledge at IIUM

Most of the respondents noted that more work needs to be done for the mission of Islamization to be fully realized at IIUM. One of the issues emphasized by the respondents is the concept of Islamization itself. Scholars should be helped to understand (and not be confused about) what Islamization of knowledge is and the various approaches to achieve it. All schools of thought should be let to develop side by side. On the other hand, it has to be realized that the mission of Islamization at IIUM is comprehensive. It involves Islamizing knowledge, as well as Islamizing human beings (both scholars and students). Most of the approaches have so far focused more on knowledge and less on people. To lead Islamization of knowledge efforts, there is a need for specialists who are capable of producing Islamized materials and textbooks for everybody. Islamization of human beings on the other hand, involves helping everybody at IIUM to live and behave in a way that is in line with the

principles of Islam. This is a challenging task, which goes beyond merely giving information in lectures and academic courses.

There has to be a paradigm shift in research and publications. Instead of individual efforts based on narrow disciplinary perspectives, focus should be on identifying the problems of the Muslim *umamah* and humanity at large, both in Malaysia and all over the world, and trying to develop solutions for them. Since human problems are rarely neatly packed and compartmentalized according to academic disciplines, the only way we can create breakthrough innovations and solutions is by taking a multi-disciplinary perspective. The Islamic perspective will have to be the core of the work of these multi-disciplinary teams. Those teams will then synthesize the solutions created and isolate from them the essential Islamic elements. That will contribute to the formulation or deduction of Islamic epistemological principles. About the importance of research, one of the respondents had this to say:

Research has to be conducted with Islamized perspectives. Of course there has to be arm-twisting. Ultimately, our graduate students have to contribute to producing Islamized knowledge. Later they will become lecturers. If they are well prepared, then Islamization will have a good future. But we are not doing that now.

I would be interested in my area of sociology, to have someone conduct research on the basic object of sociology. To what extent has society x moved to point y? To what extent has society x moved towards or away from Islam? Then we can develop indicators of how Islamic a certain society is. As the study of human societies, I believe sociology should be made compulsory for all students. We are talking about Islamization. You cannot have real Islamization when people are not doing original research. Most of the lecturers are too lazy to do research and the environment is not conducive for doing research.

To be productive, academicians have to be given the freedom to conduct research and publish their ideas without interference from the higher authorities. According to one respondent:

One of the necessary conditions for research is freedom of thought and freedom of speech. You cannot be creative when someone is telling you what to say and how to say it. In Muslim countries we do not have the freedom essential for scientific research. Muslim scholars have more freedom in America, the UK, and other western countries. How can we have a viable education system without freedom of speech?

Summary and Conclusions

The study has shown the different phases and orientations of the implementation of Islamization at IIUM. Currently, there is an atmosphere of toleration whereby scholars following different paths of Islamization are given the liberty to do so. IIUM has achieved many successes in Islamization, including the inclusion of Islamization and Integration in IIUM's vision and mission; quality academicians, who are sought after as consultants in Malaysia and overseas; an integrated curriculum, which combines modern disciplines and aspects of the Islamic worldview; and quality students, many of whom go on to make a significant impact on their communities upon graduation. Among the areas which need improvement are research and publications, and the provision of Islamized textbooks.

IIUM scholars should endeavor to find solutions for the problems humanity. These solutions will be integrative, including borrowed elements which are made suitable to the Islamic worldview. When scholars start to be productive in research, writing textbooks and teaching materials will be easy. For all this to happen, it was emphasized, there must be freedom of thought and speech. Scholars should be allowed to experiment and mistakes should be tolerated. Rigidity stifles creativity. Lastly, it was suggested that Islamization of knowledge should give equal emphasis on the development of the character of students.

End Notes

1. From its inception, the International Islamic University Malaysia was intended to respond to the crisis in knowledge as outlined in the Makkah conference of 1977. For a detailed discussion of this crisis see S. S. Husain, and S. A. Ashraf, (eds.) *Crisis in Muslim Education*. Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1979.
2. Syed. Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978. See also Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework of an Islamic Philosophy of Education*. Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1980.
3. Wan Mohd Nor, W. D.. Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge: A Brief Comparison between al-Attas and Fazlur Rahman. *Al-Shajarah*, vol.2, no. 1 (1997):1-19. See also Wan Mohd Nor, W. D. *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998.
4. Al-Faruqi, I. R. Islamization of Knowledge: The Problem, Principle, and Workplan. Herndon, VA: IIIT. 1982.
5. A. H. Abu Sulayman, (ed.) *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan*. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1989; A. H. Abu Sulayman, *Islamization of Knowledge*. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House and IIIT, 1989; and Abu Sulayman, A. H.. *Islamization: Reforming Contemporary Knowledge*. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1994.
6. T. J. Al-Alwani. Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today. *AJISS*, vol. 12, no 1 (1995): 81-101.
7. Louay Safi, The Quest for an Islamic Methodology: The Islamization of Knowledge Project in its Second Decade. *AJISS*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1993): 23-48.

8. See, for instance, ‘AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, “Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science”, *AJISS*, vol. 2, no 2 (1985): 263-289, and Akbar S.Ahmed, “Toward Islamic Anthropology”, *AJISS*, vol. 3, no.2 (1986): 181-230. See also I. A. Ragab, . The Islamic Perspective on Theory Building in the Social Sciences. *AJISS*, vol. 10, no.1 (1993):1-22; I. A. Ragab, Creative Engagement in Modern Social Science Scholarship: A Significant Component of the Islamization of Knowledge Effort. *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1997): 35-49; and I. A. Ragab, On the Methodology of Islamizing Social Science. *Intellectual Discourse.*, vol. 7, no. 1(1999): 27-52. See also Arif, Muhammad, “The Islamization of Knowledge and Some Methodological Issues in Paradigm Building: The General Case of Social Science with a Special Focus on Economics”, *AJISS*, vol. 4, no. 1(1987): 51-71.
9. See, for instance, Mona Abaza, *Debates On Islam And Knowledge In Malaysia And Egypt*, London: Routledge/Curzon, 2002.
10. Many scholars have contributed to the debate on Islamization of knowledge. Among the most outstanding contributions are: Fazlur Rahman. Islamization of Knowledge: A Response. *AJISS*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1988): 3-11; Ziauddin Sardar, Islamization of Knowledge: A State of the Art Report. In Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *An Early Crescent: The Future of Knowledge and the Environment in Islam*. London: Mansell, 1989; S. H. Nasr. Islam and the Problem of Modern Science. *MAAS Journal of Islamic Science*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1988): 59-74; Bugaje, U. Contemporary Muslim Response to the Challenge of Knowledge: Separating the Grain from the Chaff. *Encounters, Journal of Cultural Perspectives*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (1996); Rosnani, Hashim & Imran, Rossidy Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative Analysis of the Conception of Al-Attas and al-Faruqi. *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2000): 19-44; Yasien Mohamed. Islamization: A Revivalist Response to Modernity. *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1993):. 2-23; Yasien Mohamed. Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative Analysis of Faruqi and Rahman. *The Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1993): 27-40; and Yasien

Mohamed. Islamization of Knowledge: A Critique. *AJISS*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1994): 282-294.

11. The latest effort in this category is M. A. Haneef *A Critical Survey of Islamization of knowledge*. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 2005.
12. Although some scholars, such as Mona Abaza, *Debates*, op.cit., and Bugaje, *Contemporary Muslim Response*, op.cit., made some comments on the implementation of Islamization, their main focus was more on the concept than on the implementation of Islamization in any particular institution.
13. See John C. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998.
14. Abu Sulayman's 1999 article clearly stated that his new priority was Islamization of education, especially early childhood and primary education. See Abu Sulayman, *From Islamization of Knowledge to Islamization of Education*. *AJISS*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1999)
15. On the political inclination of Islamization during the Abu Sulayman era, see Yedullah Kazemi, *Reclaiming the Tradition: An Essay on the Condition of the Possibility of Islamic Knowledge*. *AJISS*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1998): 97-108.
16. Nik Ahmad Hisham, I., Nik Suryani, N. A. R., Mohd Sahari, N., & Ahmad Marzuki, H. Z. *Integration and Internalization in the Inter-Group Relations in Institutions of Tertiary Education: A Case Study of the International Islamic University Malaysia*. *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol. 20, nos.1&2 (2003): 52-66.