

Islamization of knowledge and educational development: The case of Bangladesh

M Abdul Aziz*

Abstract: Concerned with educational dualism in the Muslim world, scholars have embarked upon the movement for Islamization of Knowledge (IOK). The major impetus for this movement came from the first world conference held in 1977. This gave rise to institutional mechanisms for the implementation of resolutions passed in a number of subsequent world conferences and international seminars. Bangladesh did not lag behind in this effort to Islamize knowledge. Based upon personal observation, experience and documentary evidence, this study found that the effort at Islamization is undertaken by the government of Bangladesh, though its intensity varied from one government to the other. Private sectors have also been in the forefront of Islamization movement despite its shortcomings and limitations. Finally Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought has taken note-worthy steps with a comprehensive approach in the field of Islamization of Knowledge and educational development that can be a model for others at home and abroad.

Keywords: Education, Islamization of knowledge, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Institute of Islamic thought.

Introduction

A disturbing legacy of the colonial rule in Muslim countries is educational dualism (Rosnani, 2004). The colonial rulers introduced modern secular educational system as mainstream in schools, colleges and universities and made the existing Islamic educational system irrelevant for socioeconomic, political and administrative sectors. The objectives of the imported modern educational system are aptly described by the British Viceroy Lord Macaulay's famous education minute of 1835 which says:

* M. Abdul Aziz, the executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought, Bangladesh, is currently pursuing Ph.D. at the International Islamic University Malaysia. E-mail: azizbiit@gmail.com

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of sciences borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population (Lees, 1871: 102).

This education policy, followed by all the colonial rulers in Muslim lands, had three distinct objectives: first, it wanted to create a minority of elite educated class who would be mere supportive instrument for their colonial rule; second, this class would identify itself intellectually, politically and in terms of attitude and worldview with the secular West; and finally, it would institutionalize the Western secular-based sciences and education in the colonized world. And indeed, the Muslim countries contain the three elements even centuries after gaining independence from colonial rule. These elements sustain educational dualism (religious/secular), class antagonism (ulama/secular elites), and national divisions (traditional/modern).

During the post-colonial period, the education system in the Muslim world remained basically the same. However, some governments had attempted to introduce certain reforms to bring Islamic elements into the mainstream secular system of education. For instance, once Pakistan was established in 1947 the then education minister Fazlur Rahman invited all prominent Muslim educationists to give an Islamic character to the education system inherited from the British. The initiative resulted only in the introduction of the teaching of *Islamiyat* (Islamic Studies) as a compulsory subject at all levels of education. They had failed to identify the basic fundamental problems, i.e. anti-religious secularist approach in mainstream education that governed all other branches of knowledge (Ashraf, 1990: 5).

Over time, the issue of education system in the Muslim world was seriously taken by the governments as well as by renowned Islamic intellectuals. The growing concern culminated in the first world conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah al-Mukarramah in 1977. The conference concluded that the root cause of the *Ummatic* malaise is the inappropriate education system. Therefore, in order to address the problem, the conference formally introduced the theory of Islamization of knowledge (IOK) & education. The conference

recommended reforms in the education system through reorienting the objectives of education and integrating and synthesizing “perennial” and “acquired” knowledge.

In order to achieve the ultimate aims and objectives of education, knowledge be classified into two categories: (a) ‘Perennial knowledge’ based on the Divine revelation presented in the Qur’an and Sunnah and all that can be derived from them with emphasis on the Arabic language as the key to the understanding of both (b) ‘Acquired knowledge’ including social, natural and applied sciences susceptible to quantitative growth and multiplication, limited variations and cross-cultural borrowings as long as consistency with the Shari’ah as the source of values is maintained (Conference Book, 1977: 78).

The initial idea of Islamization of education in 1977 was reinforced with further conceptual and methodological clarity in the 2nd world conference on Muslim education in 1980 which stated that the conflict between mind and society can be overcome through integration of faith and intellect and a common religious approach to all kinds of knowledge. This integration is possible only when Islamic schools of thoughts are established in each branch of acquired knowledge and an Islamic philosophy of sciences is agreed upon. The conference also opined that the integration of curriculum necessarily implies the integration of the two systems of education prevalent in Muslim countries leading to the enrichment of both perennial and acquired knowledge establishing harmony between the two. The IOK movement subsequently led to a number of international conferences (IIIT, 1988) held in different Muslim countries including at Lugano (1977), Islamabad (1980/1982), Dhaka (1981), Jakarta (1982), Kuala Lumpur (1984), Khartoum (1987), Cairo (1987), and Cape Town (1990). All these conferences agreed to Islamize the acquired knowledge through developing Islamic concepts, re-structuring the curriculum, writing textbooks and building Islamic academics in various disciplines of knowledge.

This study analyses the attempts made in and success achieved in the struggle for Islamization in Bangladesh. This movement has been adopted by various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Consequently, this study analyzes the steps taken by the government of Bangladesh, private sector efforts in this direction and the role of Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought in furthering the IOK movement.

The Bangladesh experience

Bangladesh is a South Asian country with over 150 million people of whom Muslims constitute 88 percent. It is located on the Bay of Bengal, bordered with India and Myanmar. Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 from Pakistan though it shares a common British colonial experience with India and Pakistan.

There are two parallel public education systems in Bangladesh: the secular-based general education system and Islam-based 'Alia Madrasah system. In addition, there is also an independent second Islam-based system called the Qawmi Madrasah. The general education system is the mainstream system fashioned after the Western secular model and it runs from primary to university level. In this system, there exists no Islamic religious teaching and philosophy. It produces a class of people as envisioned by Lord Macaulay. On the other hand, the 'Alia Madrasah education system is a continuation of the traditional Islamic system with modifications introduced by the British during the colonial period and by the Bangladesh government. The present version is a combination of Islamic and secular sciences but weighs more on the religious side. The traditional Islamic curriculum has been much modified to fit the system more into the mainstream secular fold instead of Islamizing the secular ones. The independent Qawmi madrasa system follows even more traditional curriculum disregarding secular sciences altogether.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) formulates curriculum for primary to higher secondary levels of general education system. There are separate education boards to formulate the curriculum for 'Alia and Qawmi systems. The universities are independent to formulate their own curriculum under the guidelines framed by University Grants Commission (UGC).

Education policy of Bangladesh government

After independence, the government of Bangladesh formed an Education Commission consisting of 19 members and led by Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda, in 1972. The members of the Commission, visited India for ideas and experience and submitted a report to the Bangladesh Government in May 1973 recommending the separation of religion from the education system. The curriculum recommended by the Commission did not contain any course on religious education from class one to eight but recommended it as an elective subject from class nine to twelve for the humanities group only, not for science or commerce groups (Bangladesh Education Commission Report, 1974). This generated a

fierce debate and criticisms which led to an official public opinion survey. The result showed that only 21 per cent of the people supported the Commission's proposed policy, while the majority was in favour of having religious education in schools. Under popular pressure, therefore, the Commission revised the proposal and recommended that religious instruction should be given from class six to eight and that in class nine to eleven it should be introduced in humanities as an elective subject only. It is clear that the Commission's policies were aligned with the Constitutional provisions of secularism and socialism (Azharul Islam, 2001). The policy, however, was abandoned by the subsequent regime. Much later three more education commissions were formed (Shamsul Huq Commission 1997; Moniruzzaman Commission in 2003 and Shamsul Huq Commission in 2007) along with several national committees to examine the recommendations but none of those had been implemented.

Finally in 2009, the Awami League government formed a National Education Commission headed by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury. The Commission was assigned to review the previous recommendations specially by the Kudrat-e-Khuda Commission 1974 and Shamsul Huq Commission 1997 and prepare a comprehensive and modern scientific education policy for the country. Accordingly, Professor Kabir Chowdhury Commission submitted a national education policy to the government in 2010 which was passed by the National Parliament in the same year. The policy states:

The primary objectives are directed towards cultivation of human values whereas the aims and objectives of higher education is to build up citizens who will possess scientific, secular, liberal, humane, progressive and forward-looking mindset (National Education Policy 2010: 8/26).

This policy was also followed by necessary appendix with details of educational plans, i.e. syllabus, textbook etc which show a clear preference for institutionalizing secularism and marginalizing Islamic identity, Muslim values, thoughts and cultures.

Government efforts towards Islamization of knowledge & education

Even though the first government of Bangladesh was under pressure from internal and external forces to adopt a secular education system, de-emphasizing Islam almost completely, the government could not simply by-pass the dominant Islamic presence, in terms of belief and social practice, in the country. As a consequence, the government adopted certain initiatives to patronize Islam

officially. The subsequent governments intensified this patronization in the context of national identity building, political play and as part of developing closer relations with the Muslim world. Some of these initiatives are described below.

1. Establishment of Islamic foundation Bangladesh

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh was established on 28th March 1975 by the then president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a mission to carrying out scientific research on Islam and promoting Islamic knowledge. It is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Bangladesh Government. As per Islamic Foundation Act 1975, the major objectives of the Foundation are: 1) to establish, manage and support Mosques, Islamic Centers, Academies and Institutes; 2) to undertake research on the contributions of Islam to science, history & civilization; philosophy, politics, economics, culture, law and jurisprudence; 3) to publish books, periodicals and pamphlets on the above mentioned areas of studies; 4) to organize conferences, seminars, debates and symposia on matters relating to Islam and knowledge; and 5) to provide scholarships and awards for outstanding contribution in the field of Islamic studies.

Since its inception, the Islamic Foundation has been engaged in the propagation of religious education, publication of Islamic books and periodicals and organizing workshops for the training of Imams. It maintains six Divisional offices, 58 District level offices, seven Imam Training Academies and 31 Islamic Mission Centers all over the country. The Islamic Foundation has contributed to Islamize the human mind in general and particularly Islamization of education and knowledge in particular. It has conducted research and published about 3000 books on the Qur'an, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet), Sirah (Biography of the Prophet), Encyclopedia, Philosophy, Science, Art, Literature, Culture, Education, Economics, History & Civilization, Social Polity and Children's literature.

2. Establishment of Islamic university Bangladesh

In response to the long standing demand of Muslim scholars, the government of Bangladesh declared its decision on 1st December 1976 to establish an "Islamic University" in Bangladesh. Accordingly the then President General Ziaur Rahman laid the foundation of this University on 22nd November 1979. Later, the National Parliament of Bangladesh adopted "Islamic University Act" on 27th December

1980 with an aim of higher studies and research in all Islamic disciplines as well as other disciplines in the light of Islamic faith and vision. The powers and functions for establishing Islamic University are described as follows:

... to provide for instruction in theology and other fields of Islamic studies and comparative jurisprudence and such other branches of learning at Graduate and Postgraduate levels as the University may think fit and make provision for research including Post-Doctorate research and training for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge (The Bangladesh Gazette 1980, The Islamic University Act 1980, Clause 5(a), (37).

However, the university started its academic activities in 1986, and since then it has been producing a new generation of scholars in the field of theology, Islamic Studies and Jurisprudence. But, in the field of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, the university could not offer Islamized education and research facilities. Yet the University is one of the major public universities in Bangladesh and the largest seat of higher education in the south-west part of the country having about 10 thousand regular students studying in 22 Academic Departments under five Faculties namely Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Applied Science and Technology, Faculty of Business Administration, and Faculty of Law and Shariah. Currently, the University is also acting as the affiliating authority for the Fazil and Kamil Madrasahs of the Alia stream Islamic system all over the country.

3. Establishment of the institute of Islamic education and research

Following the first World Conference on Muslim education in 1977 at Makkah, a follow up committee composed of Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, the then Vice-President of King Abdul Aziz University and Dr. Sayed Ali Ashraf, the Secretary of the committee, visited Bangladesh and upon discussion with the government they agreed to establish a centre for Islamic education and research. Accordingly, the government had the proposed institution passed by the parliament called the "Institute of Islamic Education and Research" in 1980 as an autonomous body which was subsequently endorsed by the president in the same year.

The main objective of the Institute is to formulate Islamic concepts for all branches of modern knowledge. The functions of the Institute included: 1) to conduct research on Islamic education, particularly on the concept and aims of education, curricula, syllabi, teachers education and non-formal education based

on Islamic principles and ideology; 2) to act as documentation center, having a translation bureau with the task of translating the Holy Qur'an and research works by eminent scholars of Islam; 3) to formulate an educational policy based on the fundamental principles of Islam; 4) to ensure integration of traditional Islamic education with modern branches of education such as humanities, natural and social sciences; 5) to promote research on modern branches of education so that Islamic concepts drawn from the Holy Quran and Sunnah can be applied on them; 6) to undertake and promote writing of books based on Islamic concepts; 7) to develop new teaching techniques and methods at all levels of education so that Islamic ideal are installed in the minds of the student; and 8) to arrange in-service training for teachers of all levels of educational institutions.

The institute of Islamic Education and Research started functioning from January 1981 and undertook the project of analysing the textbooks of the primary stage from the Islamic point of view and preparing curricula and syllabi from the primary stage. Seven specialised committees were set up for English, Bengali, History, Geography, Mathematics, Science and Religious Studies or Islamiat. The committees, after analyzing the textbooks, prepared the curricula and detailed syllabi for the primary schools and submitted them to the Ministry for implementation. The aim was to have the same textbooks for the mainstream schools and traditional madrasahs. The institute organised seminars and symposia in order to create awareness among the educated people about Islamic education. The institute was able to produce some textbooks for primary level schools published by the School Textbook Board of Bangladesh as recommended in the Third World Conference on Muslim Education. However, the institute discontinued with the establishment of the Islamic university discussed earlier.

4. Organization of the 3rd world conference on Muslim education

On behalf of Bangladesh Government, the Institute of Islamic Education and Research in collaboration with the King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia had organized the 3rd world conference on Muslim education in 1981 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. The aims and objectives of the third world conference were as follows:

- a. To identify general shortcomings from the Islamic point of view of present text-books in all branches of knowledge at all stages of education- primary, secondary, higher- and suggest revision.

- b. To prepare guidelines for text-books on the basis of the curriculum designed at the second world conference on Muslim education.
- c. To recommend the setting up of scholarly and competent bodies in order to carry out research that may be considered necessary for implementing the guidelines for text-book writing.
- d. To recommend the methods of getting the text-books translated whenever translation is considered necessary (Information Book, Third World Conference on Muslim Education, 1981: 7).

Renowned educationist, thinkers, scholars and educational planners from home and abroad attended the conference. After this conference, all stakeholders including governments began to realize the necessity of incorporating Islamic perspective in all branches of education and took a project on writing text books for primary education.

5. Islamic amendments to the country's constitution

In a bid to shape the national identity more in line with Islamic ideals the national Constitution was amended a number of times during late 1970s and 1980s indicating that the governments actively favoured Islamization. The major amendments, known as the fifth amendments, were as follows:

1. The phrase "*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*" (In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent The Merciful) was inserted at the opening of the Constitution.
2. One of the four fundamental principles of state policy "secularism" was omitted, replacing it with "the principle of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah".
3. A phrase "Belief in the unity of Allah" was inserted.
4. In 1988, the then government of Hussain Muhammad Ershad introduced the eighth amendment making "Islam the state religion of Bangladesh."

The secular characters of the Constitution of Bangladesh were changed with Islamic ideals even though the entire political and legal system remained secular. However, the fact remains that the regimes were in favour of identifying themselves with Islam. These were important for legitimizing other Islamization plans that the governments wanted to undertake in line with world conference on Muslim education. However, in 2010 the Awami league government reverted to the 1972 secular constitution eliminating the Islamic clauses.

6. Framing Islamic educational policies

In 1987, the then government of Bangladesh formed a national committee headed by National Prof Dr Syed Ali Ahsan to examine the recommendations of four world conferences on Muslim education in Makkah, Islamabad, Dhaka and Jakarta (Naqi,1987).

The committee reviewed the same along with the Makkah declaration, adopted by 3rd Islamic conference of OIC (Organization of Islamic Conferences) held in 1981. The committee identified the major components of religious foundation in educational curriculum and suggested to re-structuring the curriculum and writing the textbook accordingly. The committee advocated to reform the education system in an unified one rather than dualistic system. The committee also requested to the government to adopt all Islamic guidelines in national education policy.

Thereafter, two other committees (1988, 1994) were formed for the same purpose. These committees came up with proposals and recommendations on infusing more Islamic elements in the educational system, but due to political changes these recommendations were never implemented.

7. Establishing Islamic-Arabic university

In 2013, the sitting government passed a bill named the “Islamic Arabic University Bill, 2013” to establish a separate Islamic Arabic University at Dhaka with its regional campuses in divisional cities. According to the bill, the university will be responsible to formulate the madrasa curriculum, impart training to teachers of the affiliated madrasas across the country. The stated objective is overall development and modernization of madrasa education. The University will have the power to affiliate around 1500 'Fazil' and 'Kamil' madrasas. The establishment of such a university is a century-old demand of religious scholars and intellectuals of Bangladesh. Earlier, the National Education Policy 2010 also recommended the establishment of such a university to supervise madrassah education.

Private sector efforts towards Islamization of knowledge and education

Due to frequent changes in government policies and inefficiency of the Islamic institutions initiated by the government, the private sector stepped in to undertake

more meaningful Islamization projects. Initiated by renowned Islamic intellectuals, the private sector focused on establishing Islamic universities, and research and training institutions.

Establishment of private universities

Private efforts in the field of education began with the establishment of several institutions of higher learning. These are discussed below.

Darul Ihsan University (DIU), Dhaka

In 1989, Sayed Ali Ashraf, one of the pioneers of World Conferences on Muslim Education founded the Institute of Islamic Higher Learning in Dhaka which later renamed as “Darul Ihsan University” in 1993. This newly established first private university in Bangladesh aimed to provide a meaningful linkage between Revealed Knowledge and Acquired Knowledge as advocated by the major scholars of the Muslim world. In order to implement this view, it established an Institute of Education as a Model in addition to other faculties such as Arts & Humanities, Business Studies, and Computer Science & Engineering. Through this university, Sayed Ali Ashraf worked tirelessly to disseminate the ideas of Islamization of Education among its faculties as well as educationist and policy makers of the country. But currently, the University has lost its founding vision and facing the crisis of its existence due to the policies and activities made by the later management.

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC)

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) was established in 1995 by the “IIUC Trust” with a group of Islamic personalities fashioned after the International Islamic University Malaysia with Islamization of knowledge as its basis. Even though it did not have necessary Islamic curriculum, it attempted to infuse Islamic ideals and morals in its graduates. In order to achieve this goal, the university established a center named, “the Center for University Requirement Courses (CENURC)” which offers few fundamental Islamic courses for all academic disciplines as compulsory. In addition to this, the courses under the Faculty of Law and Business Administration in particular include Islamic elements. The university has also founded a ‘Center for Research and Publication (CRP)’ which is contributing to promote its academic research, conducting seminar/conferences and publications with a little focus on Islamization of

Knowledge programme. The university maintains a rich library with Islamic collections and conducts trainings for administrative and academic staff as well as students to promote the spirit of Islamization. The university is now an Islamic model of higher learning institution in Bangladesh.

Manarat International University (MIU)

The MIU was established in 2001 by the “Manarat Trust” with a mission to provide dynamic leadership and moral excellence. It has a strong management under the leading Islamic thinkers of the country. It has recruited a good number of academic and administrative staff with necessary Islamic orientation, although most of them are not fully aware of the mission and strategies of Islamization. It offers few departmental courses with Islamic perspective in addition to its Islamic courses in general education (GED). However, the university is committed to maintaining the mission of Islamization in teaching and learning.

Asian University of Bangladesh (AUB)

AUB was established in 1996 by a reputed Academic and Islamic Scholar with a commitment to Islamization. Himself being a renowned Islamic economist and having a long experience of working with the IIU Malaysia, its founder Professor Dr. AHM Sadeq had the vision of Islamization of knowledge from the beginning. The university offers law, business and computer science disciplines like other private universities do. However, from the beginning it also offered few disciplines, i.e. Education, Economics, Islamic studies under the faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science which usually are ignored in private universities in Bangladesh. The university also offers few courses from Islamic perspective. However, the university gradually has lost its Islamization mission and turned into a mere conventional institution for higher education.

Bangladesh Islami University (BIU), Dhaka

The latest in process is the Bangladesh Islami University (BIU) established in 2005 by a famous Islamic cleric in Bangladesh with an Islamic mission. It has recruited its academic and administrative staff who have an Islamic background and also offers a good number of Islamic courses in different disciplines. However, its academic capacity and resources are still very limited in terms of Islamization of knowledge and educational development.

Establishment of Think-Tank, Research Organizations

Along with Islamic institutions for higher learning and research, the private sector has also embarked upon establishing Islamic research institutions. Some of the prominent such institutions are – Islamic Academy Bangladesh, Bangladesh Islamic Information Bureau, Islamic Economics Research Bureau, Islamic Education Society, Bangladesh Islamic Centre, Islamic Law Research Council & Legal Aid Bangladesh and Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT). These institutes are more or less active in undertaking academic research, seminars, conferences and trainings.

Establishment of Islamic publishing houses

In Bangladesh, there are many publishing companies that publish Islamic textbooks for madrasas and non academic Islamic literature. They hardly publish high value Islamic research materials. In order to cater publication facility for the Islamic research organizations a number of Islamic publishing companies have been established to exclusively produce high value Islamic academic research products. Those companies include- BIIB, BIIT, BIC, Academic Publishers, Adhunik Prokashani, Bangla Sahitta Parishad and Bangladesh Co-operative Book Society etc.

The role of BIIT towards Islamization of knowledge and education

Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT) registered with Bangladesh Government in 1989 as a think-tank which is engaged in Islamic academic research and in-depth studies for synthesizing education, culture and ethics. Very specifically, the institute is striving to implement the recommendations of Four International Seminar/Conferences on Islamization of Knowledge organized by AMSS/IIIT and Six World Conferences on Muslim Education organized by King AbdulAziz University and Islamic Academy Cambridge. The institute was founded by Shah Abdul Hannan and Ahmad Farid, eminent scholars of the country and led by renowned scientist Prof. Dr M Shamsur Ali and M Zohurul Islam FCA as its first President and Secretary General respectively (BIIT Prospectus, 1990). Currently, it is functioning as Bangladesh Chapter of IIIT, USA with an ultimate goal of *Ummatic* Revivalism through the reform of thought, mind and knowledge. Its major programs are described below:

1. Developing Islamic mind-set

BIIT has organized hundreds of conferences, seminars, and workshops across the country over the last years aiming to raise awareness of the crisis in mind, educational dichotomy, epistemological reform, Islamization and integration of knowledge in general and specific disciplines in particular. Distinguished Prof Dr Abdulhamid AbuSulaiman, Dr Ahmad Totonji, Prof Omar Hasan Kasule, Prof Hashim Kamali, Prof Osman Bakar, Prof Rosnani Hashim, Prof Mulyadhi Karatange, Prof Aslam Haneef, Prof Israr Ahmad Khan, Prof Dr Kameel Meera visited Bangladesh several times and delivered lectures before teachers and researchers of public and private universities in the country. In addition to them, the local resource persons of BIIT like Dr Syed Sajjad Hossain, Prof Dr M Shamsur Ali, Shah Abdul Hannan, M Azizul Huq, Prof Dr UAB Razia Akter Banu, Prof Abdun Noor have conducted many trainings and workshops in different cities in the country and played the key role in mobilizing the Bangladeshi researchers and lecturers. About 1500 teachers from different public and private universities have directly benefited from those programs.

2. Re-designing and developing the curriculum

BIIT has selected about 500 lectures and researchers from different public and private universities or institutions who have shown their commitment for contributing to their respective disciplines and divided them into different groups based on their areas of interest and specialization. In this connection, BIIT has organized a good number of Islamization workshops for those groups where IIT and BIIT resource persons contributed. After that, they met in hundreds of group/team meetings to review the existing curriculum taught at universities and English medium schools at home as well as reputed International Islamic Universities and Schools abroad. Through this process, BIIT has developed and re-designed about 150 course curriculums with necessary Islamic inputs which have covered about 15 disciplines or departments under the Faculty of Theology, Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Business Studies and Laws of major public and private universities in Bangladesh.

3. Writing textbook

BIIT has selected about 50 courses among the above mentioned 150 re-designed courses which are being taught at major public universities as core courses in

order to write the textbook accordingly. In the meantime, BIIT has published 20 books under the titled of “Social Science Series”, “Human Sciences Series”, “Education Series”, and “Law Series”. At present 30 books are under process of writing or publishing. It is to be noted that the Textbook Writing Project of IIIT, BD is basically a team work consisting of senior-junior academics, subject specialist and discipline experts of different public and private universities and research institutes in Bangladesh.

4. Compiling Islamic resource (academic) materials

Thousands of research materials which have been published in reputed Islamic academic journals had been identified, collected, classified and compiled in 80 books as Readings in Islamization of Knowledge, Education, Science, Political Thought, Economics and Business, Sociology and Anthropology, Gender & Women, Law & Jurisprudence, History & Civilization, Arts & Culture, English Language & Literature and so on. The materials are used frequently by all the teachers and researchers involved in conducting research, developing course curriculum and writing textbook from Islamic perspective.

5. Publishing research journals

BIIT has been publishing two academic research journals titled *International Journal of Islamic Thoughts (IJITs)* and *Bangladesh Journal of Islamic Thought (BJIT)*. The *IJITs* started its journey in 2012 and till now a total of 5 issues have been published containing 24 articles, 13 book reviews and 6 conference/workshop reports. The *BJIT* started its journey from 2005 and till now a total of 14 issues have been published containing 85 articles, 98 book reviews, 20 research notes and 37 conference/seminar/workshop reports. It is mentionable that the *IJITs* and *BJIT* had received more than 500 articles from Islamic perspectives from home and abroad which is a great indication of Islamic intellectuals exercise.

6. Translating the major books of major scholars of the world

BIIT translates and publishes major books of leading scholars of the world such as Ismail al-Faruqi, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Umer Chapra, Jamal Badawi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Tariq Ramadan, and Rashid Moten. A well-trained team of about 100 panel members consists of translators (50), reviewers (20), editors (20) and proof

readers (10) have been working in this project under the supervision by a Publication Sub-committee who also arranges the necessary trainings and workshops to ensure its quality. In the meantime, near about 100 (one hundred) books have been translated and published from English and Arabic into Bangla language which have proved to be valuable resources for students, teachers and professionals.

7. Conducting basic research

Near about 50(fifty) basic research projects have been conducted by the Institute and a number of them have already been published. A few titles of these research includes: *Civilization and Society, Guidelines to Islamic Economics, Globalization and the Muslim World, The Islamic Theory of Jihad and International System, Origin and Development of Experimental Science, Islam in Bengali Verse, Selections from Tafsirul Qur'an* and so on.

8. Teaching/training on professional courses

BIIT has been conducting a good number of training courses on Teaching Methodology, Research Methodology, Communicative Arabic, Administration & Management, Gender & Women Issues, Medical Ethics, and Curriculum Development with an emphasis on Islamic view points. More than 1000 professionals participated in the courses.

9. Library service

BIIT runs a central library in the capital city having more than nine thousand books of Islamic resources, well decorated kids corner, audio-visual corner, e-resource centre and computer facilities with easy access to internet. In addition to this, the institute has established two chapter libraries in divisional headquarters along with 15 BIIT corners in reputed public and private universities across the country.

10. Other activities

BIIT also holds Dialogue, Exchange of Views and Round Table conferences on Reform of Madrasha Education, Medical Education, English Medium School Program and Interfaith Issues as part of its Partnership Development Programs

with GOs, NGOs, think-tanks, High Commissions and Foreign Missions in the country. It also provides scholarships for postgraduate studies at home and abroad.

Conclusion

Islamization of knowledge and education has been a noble initiative to reorient the Muslims towards Islamic knowledge, science and heritage. It also means to inculcate spiritual, moral and ethical personalities. To do this, educational reforms intended to replace secular philosophy of education with Islamic philosophy has been recommended by Muslim intellectuals. This article discussed the education reform and Islamization activities undertaken and performed by the Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT) as practical manifestation of Islamization of knowledge and education project.

The article found that the mainstream education system in Bangladesh is secular Western even though there are parallel Madrasha education systems. However, the Madrasha systems receive secondary importance politically and economically. Moreover, the Madrasha systems are either modified more along the conventional secular line or are completely divorced of modern sciences. So, true Islamic spirit of teaching and learning as a great civilization force is absent in the existing educational systems.

In this context, BIIT, as catalyst, has undertaken awareness raising programs among professionals, academicians and institutions, and simultaneously has done the job of producing young intellectuals, Islamic academic research and production of textbooks and reference materials to cater the need for Islamization in Bangladesh. In this regard, the institute has achieved impressive success over the past few decades despite facing at times hostile political environment. BIIT can be a model for such institutions for other Muslim countries.

References

- Azharul Islam, A.K.M. (2001). The Education Policy and Curricula of Schools in Bangladesh: An evaluation in the light of the Makkah Declaration, *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 19 (1): 71-76.
- Ashraf, Syed Ali (1990). *Islamic Education Movement- An Historical Analysis (1977-1990)*. UK.: The Islamic Academy Cambridge.

- The Bangladesh Gazette (1980). ACT NO. XXXI OF 1980 (An Act to establish an Institute of Islamic Education and Research), 20th March 1980, Dacca: Bangladesh.
- The Bangladesh Gazette (1980). ACT No XXXVII of 1980, (The Islamic University Act 1980), 27th December, 1980, Dacca: Bangladesh.
- BIIT Prospectus (1990). Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh Education Commission Report, 1974. At http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/devnetsolutions/pdf_view.php?book=BANGLADESH%20EDUCATION%20COMMISSION%20REPORT%20%20-1974.pdf (Accessed May 20, 2015).
- Conference Book (1977). *The First World Conference on Muslim Education*. Jeddah & Macca al-Mukarramah: King Abdulaziz University.
- Information Book (1981). *Third World Conference on Muslim Education* (Seminar on Textbook Development : 5th -7th March, 1981). Jeddah, KSA: King Abdulaziz University, and Institute of Islamic Education & Research, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- IIIT (1988). *Islam: Sources and Purpose of Knowledge* (Proceedings of selected papers and conferences on IOK), 1402 AH, 1982 AC.
- Lees, W. Nassau (ed.). (1871). *Indian Musalmans: Being Three Letters reprinted from the Times with an article on the late prince consort and four articles on Education, with an Appendix Containing Lord Macaulay's Minutes*. London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate.
- Naqi, Syed Ali (1987). Implementations of the Recommendations of the Four World Conferences on Muslim Education in Bangladesh: Problems and Their Solutions, *Muslim Education Quaterly*, 4 (4).
- National Education Policy - English (2010). Chapter 8, P-8/26, Dhaka: The Ministry of Education, Bangladesh Government.
- National Education Policy (1974). Appendix. Dhaka: The Ministry of Education, Bangladesh Government.
- Report of Syed Ali Ahsan Education Committee (17th July 1988). Dhaka: Bangladesh Secretariat.
- Rosnani, Hashim (2004). *Educational Dualism in Malaysia: Implications for Theory and Practice*. Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press.
- Zohurul Islam, M. (ed.) (1997), *Islamization of Academic Disciplines (Proceeding of a National Convention of Subject Specialists held in 1994)*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought.