

# RECASTING THE DISCIPLINES UNDER THE FRAMEWORK OF ISLAM: Lessons from the Textbook Writing Initiative at Universitas Islam Indonesia

Ilya Fadjr Maharika\*, Fathul Wahid, Nur Kholis  
Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
\*maharika@uii.ac.id

---

## INFO ARTIKEL

Diterima: 27 September 2020  
Direvisi: 4 April 2021  
Dipublikasi 27 September 2021

*Kata kunci:*  
Recasting, The Framework of Islam,  
Textbook Writing

## ABSTRAK

*The idea of integrating human knowledge and Islamic values, or Islamization of knowledge, has triggered fruitful discussions, but the concrete output in terms of an 'Islamized' textbook has not occurred. In this paper, we report practical insights from the textbook writing initiative at Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) to materialize the idea. Our reflection on the ongoing process has identified several challenges. These include diversity of the disciplines, limited exposure to the philosophy of knowledge, lack of ready-to-use integration methods and inadequate mastery of the Islamic legacy. To cope with the challenges, we have taken several actions, including arranging a series of workshops (on the philosophy of knowledge and integration strategies), providing relevant literature and offering technical assistance. In concluding, we present an overview of the future directions that UII will take.*

*Keywords:* textbook writing; Islamization of knowledge; integration of human knowledge.

## A. Introduction

We are aware that the idea implied by our paper's title may be considered by some as unnecessary or even a utopian work. These people are the hard-line scientists (Guessoum, 2009) or the rejectionists (Migdadi, 2011). On the other hand, arguing that the development of disciplines is value free is disputable (e.g. Migdadi, 2011). We take the latter standpoint and applaud the idea of Islamization of knowledge proposed, among others, by Ismail Al-Faruqi more than 40 years ago, but we do not completely reject what has been produced by 'Westerners'.

According to Al-Faruqi, to Islamize is 'to recast knowledge as Islam relates to it; i.e.

to redefine and reorder the data, to rethink the reasoning and relating of the data to re-evaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam' (Al-Faruqi, 1982, p. 15). However, we contend that the concept is not monosemous but rather involves multiple approaches (Dzilo, 2012). Nowadays, the 'integration of human knowledge' (IoHK) is a preferable term than 'Islamization of knowledge' (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2013). By integration we understand that religion and knowledge do not conflict and are not independent of each other,

but both can be integrated and framed in harmonious dialog (cf. Guessoum, 2009).

As its ultimate goal is to build Islamic civilization, we argue that the Islamization of knowledge is not a time-bounded or short-term project but instead a piecemeal and life-time endeavour (Khalil, 1995; Nasr, 1991). In other words, we must start somewhere. Al-Faruqi's 'work plan' proposed that to disseminate Islamized knowledge, we have to recast the discipline under the framework of Islam, which is presented in the university textbook (Al-Faruqi, 1982). The textbook may replace or complement the standard ones (Haneef, 2005).

This is our point of departure. Hence, in 2015, Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) responded to this idea by encouraging and facilitating all the departments to write a textbook for their disciplines. We note here that this paper is not a conceptual one but rather documents our reflections or lessons learned from the first batch/year of this initiative. This initiative can be considered as part of the practical level of Islamization of knowledge (Khalil, 1995). Hence, we expect that this paper will provide practical insights, which in turn will enrich further discussion.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First, we briefly describe the initiative from a more practical viewpoint. We then identify the challenges we face throughout the implementation process. We end with concluding remarks and a short description of the way forward.

## **B. Our Initiative: Textbook Writing Grant**

IoHK has been set by the founding fathers of UII as its ultimate mission since its establishment in 1945. Mohammad Hatta, one of the founders, stated that '[UII] is the meeting ground between religion and knowledge with good collaboration to leverage welfare of the society' (Universitas Islam Indonesia, 1994). However, we confess that this ultimate mission to some extent has been marginalized during its development. To cope with this problem, in 2015, we introduced a textbook writing initiative by involving all the departments through a grant scheme on a rolling basis.

The initiative is designed to build a collective awareness among academic staff to integrate Islamic values and knowledge (*al-ilm*) and to formulate various strategies to identify Islamic concepts related to ontological, epistemological and axiological aspects. As the final product, we expect to produce textbooks for various disciplines rooted in, inspired by, framed with, or confirming Islamic values or teaching.

UII has assigned the Board of Academic Development to the initiative. In addition to setting up the grant scheme, it is also responsible for making the guidelines, inviting the departments to partake, evaluating the proposals, arranging a series of workshops, providing technical assistance, editing the manuscripts, and finally facilitating textbook publications.

In 2015, eight departments were selected to be part of the initiative. They set up a team consisting of lecturers in their

respective departments, but they are also able to invite others from other departments to be involved (to provide specific expertise, such as tafseer or Arabic). At the university level, we have conducted a series of workshops on the philosophy of knowledge and integration methods. We have been fortunate to get support from the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), which has provided human resources for some of the workshops.

At the department level, the team has also arranged a more specialized workshop to review and critique the manuscripts under development to get feedback. The first batch of the textbook writing initiative is still a work in progress at various levels; some departments have developed book manuscripts, some have succeeded in completing chapter drafts, and others are still conceptualizing.

### C. Methods

This paper is based on our reflections on the ongoing initiative of the textbook writing grant. All the authors are involved in the initiative at various stages/aspects. Data are mainly collected from written documents (such as the book proposals and book manuscripts), and our anecdotal notes are drawn from our involvement in various stages, including the selection of book proposals, workshops and informal discussions with the technical assistance team and the writing teams.

In this paper, we focus on the empirical challenges identified throughout the preparation and writing stage. These issues are

important for several reasons. First, although the production of the textbook is considered important, the concrete output in terms of an 'Islamized' textbook is limited (Hashim & Abdallah, 2013). Second, the extant literature often emphasizes the 'Islamization' of the social sciences and education, overlooking the natural sciences and even engineering disciplines (which are included as an area of concern under this initiative) or even considering them as unnecessary (Kalin, 2002). Third, there is limited knowledge about strategies on how to cope with possible challenges.

### D. Lessons Learned: Challenges and Curative Actions

As we predicted at the beginning of the process, several challenges need to be addressed. Our reflections identify several of these.

#### 1. The challenges

The first challenge is the diversity of disciplines. Our textbook writing initiative is applied to all disciplines, and this decision opens a new ground of discussion as previous initiatives mainly focused on the humanities, social sciences and education (Kalin, 2002). As noted by Kalin (2002, p. 61), Al-Faruqi argues 'that the body of knowledge generated by modern natural sciences is neutral and as such requires no special attention'. However, we take a different view. We contend that any discipline can to be Islamized in 'its own right'. Some disciplines may require a new philosophical foundation that touches upon ontological, epistemological and axiological

aspects, while others may need reforms in one or two aspects (cf. Purwanto, 2008). For example, engineering disciplines may strongly focus on axiological aspects, while the other two aspects would still be relevant for discussion to some extent. However, this standpoint is open for discussion.

The diversity of disciplines demands different integration frameworks. In fact, there is no 'one size fits all' integration method. Hence, the second challenge we face is a lack of ready-to-use integration methods. Several integration frameworks have been proposed, such as by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). In term of knowledge construction, IIUM (2013) categories the necessity of IoHK into four levels: low (such as by accepting, acknowledging, and promoting existing knowledge), medium (such as by improvising and adapting), high (such as by correcting and seriously critiquing), and highest (such as by discovering and revitalizing). In Indonesia, for instance, the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University developed a framework called the 'scientific spider web' with two main concepts of integration and interconnection of Islamic teaching (an-nash), natural or social sciences (al-'ilm) and philosophy (al-falsafah) (Abdullah, 2006). These frameworks are very useful, however, at the practical level they need to be translated into more operationalized steps. An example of a concrete output in the form of a textbook is also very limited.

The third challenge emerges from the fact that not all the lecturers have sufficient

exposure to the philosophy of knowledge. This may be a general case in the Indonesian context, as philosophical discourses get a marginalized position, if any, at the higher educational institution. In this regard, we follow the position of Ibn Rushd (or Averroes) who argued that philosophy and religion should go hand in hand; the two must agree and support each other. Further, as cited by Guessoum (2009, p. 58), according to Ibn Rushd, 'the enmity and quarrels which such [injuries] stir up between the two, when they (religion and philosophy) are in fact mutually loving friends by nature and essence'.

Hence, philosophy of knowledge to some extent relates to the theoretical level of the Islamization of knowledge, especially in finding ways of integration. According to Khalil (1995, p. 1), the theoretical level serves as 'an introduction to the second [the practical level], explains the dimensions, motives, aims and main stages of the process and identifies ways of implementing them in all the different stages of knowledge'. (Italics added).

The fourth challenge is inadequate mastery of the Islamic legacy. According to Al-Faruqi's 'work plan' (Al-Faruqi, 1982), IoHK demands a creative synthesis of the Islamic legacy and modern knowledge. This means that the IoHK initiative 'cannot start from scratch, discarding the rich legacy of our ancestors in every field of knowledge' (Khalil, 1995, p. 10). The problem is that not all sources are easily accessible, both in terms of geographical location, format that mainly is in printed form, language (mainly in Arabic and some have been translated into other

languages) and the level of our knowledge that makes intellectual access possible (see the third challenge). Hence, the IoHK needs orchestrated collective efforts that require a large number of experts in every discipline.

## 2. The Curative Actions

To cope with the presented challenges, we have taken various curative actions. In doing so, we carefully manage the level of our expectations as many of the challenges cannot be met in a short time. However, we do believe that our actions will reduce the burdens to some extent.

Our curative actions include arranging a series of workshops on the philosophy of knowledge and integration strategies. The workshops are held both at the university level and at the department level by involving all the lecturers from the respective departments. We invite resource people, both from Indonesia and overseas, by the generous support from IIIT.

We also facilitate the department in procuring relevant literature in the form of books and journal articles. We hope that this idea to some extent will connect the team with the Islamic legacy and the state-of-the-art of the IoHK initiatives in the respective disciplines.

In addition, we have teamed with technical assistance to serve as ‘sparring partner’ and ‘learning companion’ as part of the department team. Whenever possible, the technical assistance team presents at the workshops because creating a common

understanding in this kind of mission is very important.

## E. Concluding Remarks

In this paper we have presented some challenges that have emerged during the textbook writing process in the context of IoHK. The challenges, in fact, are intertwined between the theoretical and practical levels (cf. Khalil, 1995). Despite the challenges we face, we strive to succeed in this initiative. Our humble goal is that within the next four years, by the end of 2018, each department at least produces one textbook bearing ‘Islamized knowledge’.

We will use the textbook produced from this initiative as part of our curriculum, either for an independent subject or to be integrated in various subjects. We hope that some of the books can be ‘internationalized’. In such a case, IIIT will help to facilitate translating the book into international languages to reach a broader audience.

### References

- Abdullah, M. A. (2006). *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1982). *Islamization of Knowledge: The Problem, Principles and the Workplan*. Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Dzilo, H. (2012). The concept of "Islamization of knowledge" and its philosophical implications. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23(3), 247–256.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2012.676779>
- Guessoum, N. (2009). Science, religion, and the quest for knowledge and truth: an Islamic perspective. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 5(1), 55–69.  
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-009-9208-3>
- Haneef, M. A. (2005). *A Critical Survey of Islamization of Knowledge*. Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Press.
- Hashim, R., & Abdallah, S. S. (2013). Islamization of human knowledge in theory and practice: Achievements, challenges and prospects in the IIUM context. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies*, 1(1), 1–12.
- International Islamic University Malaysia. (2013). *IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation*. Kuala Lumpur: CENTRIS.
- Kalin, I. (2002). Three views of science in the Islamic world. In R. Peters, M. Iqbal, & S. N. Haq (Eds.), *God, Life and the Cosmos: Christian and Islamic Perspectives* (pp. 43–75). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Khalil, I. al D. (1995). *Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology*. London: International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Migdadi, M. Al. (2011). Issues in Islamization of knowledge, man and education. *Revue Académique Des Sciences Humaines et Sociales*, 7, 3–16.
- Nasr, S. V. R. (1991). Islamization of knowledge: A critical overview. *Islamic Studies*, 30(3), 387–400.
- Purwanto, A. (2008). *Ayat-Ayat Semesta: Sisi-Sisi Al-Qur'an yang Terlupakan*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Universitas Islam Indonesia. (1994). *Setengah Abad UII: Sejarah Perkembangan Universitas Islam Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: UII Press.