Reimagining English Studies through Islamization: An Examination of Cultural and Institutional Challenges in Two Private Islamic Universities in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

This study examines the Islamization of English Language and Literature (IOELL) in two private Islamic universities in Bangladesh, highlighting the cultural, institutional, and sociopolitical challenges of reimagining a historically Western, secular-oriented discipline. Drawing on in-depth interviews with faculty, students, and policymakers, as well as institutional documents, the research investigates how Islamic ethics are integrated into curricula, pedagogy, and institutional strategies. Findings reveal contrasting approaches: Islamic University-I (IU-I) implements a structured, systematic Islamization framework, linking Western literature to Islamic ethics and emphasizing moral reflection, whereas Islamic University-II (IU-II) adopts a more flexible approach, granting faculty greater autonomy but resulting in uneven depth and consistency in integration. Both universities, however, confront multiple challenges, including divergent conceptions and ambiguities of Islamization, epistemic and curricular tensions between the Western canon and Islamic values, and selective integration of Islamic content across courses. Classroom practices entail continuous pedagogical negotiation, while institutional and sociopolitical forces—regulatory constraints, limited autonomy from the University Grants Commission (UGC) and Education Ministry, politicized secularization, and policy volatility—shape implementation capacity. Further challenges include Islamically oriented faculty shortages and governance limitations. The study highlights the interaction of curriculum, pedagogy, institutional policy, and sociopolitical context in embedding Islamic epistemologies within English education in Muslim-majority settings.

Keywords: Islamization of English Studies, Curriculum Integration, Pedagogical Negotiation, Islamic Universities in Bangladesh**,** Institutional and Sociopolitical Challenges

إعادة تصور الدراسات الإنجليزية من خلال أسلمة التعليم: دراسة للتحديات الثقافية والمؤسسية في جامعتين إسلاميتين خاصتين في بنغلاديش

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة أسلمة اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها في جامعتين إسلاميتين خاصتين في بنغلاديش، مع تسليط الضوء على التحديات الثقافية والمؤسسية والسوسيولوجية-السياسية المرتبطة بإعادة تصور تخصص ذي جذور غربية وتوجه علماني تاريخي. واعتمدت الدراسة على مقابلات متعمقة مع أعضاء هيئة التدريس والطلبة وصانعي السياسات، إلى جانب تحليل الوثائق المؤسسية، بهدف استكشاف كيفية دمج القيم الإسلامية في المناهج وطرائق التدريس والاستراتيجيات المؤسسية. وكشفت النتائج عن مقاربتين متباينتين؛ إذ تعتمد الجامعة الإسلامية الأولى إطاراً منظماً ومنهجياً لعملية الأسلمة، يربط الأدب الغربي بالأخلاقيات الإسلامية ويؤكد على التأمل القيمي والأخلاقي، في حين تنتهج الجامعة الإسلامية الثانية مقاربة أكثر مرونة تمنح أعضاء هيئة التدريس قدراً أكبر من الاستقلالية، لكنها تؤدي إلى تفاوت في عمق الاتساق ومستوى الدمج. ومع ذلك، تواجه الجامعتان تحديات متعددة، من بينها تباين التصورات وغموض مفهوم الأسلمة، والتوترات المعرفية والمنهجية بين المدونة الغربية والقيم الإسلامية، والدمج الانتقائي للمحتوى الإسلامي عبر المقررات. وتتطلب الممارسات الصفية تفاوضاً تربوياً مستمراً، في حين تؤثر العوامل المؤسسية والسوسيولوجية-السياسية—مثل القيود التنظيمية، ومحدودية الاستقلالية عن لجنة المنح الجامعية ووزارة التعليم، وتسييس العلمانية، وتقلب السياسات—في القدرة على التنفيذ. وتشمل التحديات الإضافية نقص الكوادر الأكاديمية ذات التوجه الإسلامي والقيود المرتبطة بالحوكمة. وتبرز الدراسة التفاعل المعقد بين المنهج الدراسي، وطرائق التدريس، والسياسات المؤسسية، والسياق السوسيولوجي-السياسي في ترسيخ المعارف والمرجعيات المعرفية الإسلامية ضمن تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في السياقات ذات الغالبية المسلمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *أسلمة دراسات اللغة الإنجليزية، تكامل المنهج الدراسي، التفاوض البيداغوجي، الجامعات الإسلامية في بنغلاديش، التحديات المؤسسية والسوسيولوجية-السياسية*

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Introduction

A complicated combination of colonial histories, postcolonial nation-building, and global economic demands has influenced the English Studies (ES) development in Bangladesh. English has been given a paradoxical status since its independence: as a symbol of Western domination, it is both crucial to social mobility and international interaction as well as academic progress. Islamization discourses of recent transnational Islamic intellectual movements have brought new ideological pressures in the conceptualization, teaching, and legitimization of ELL in higher education. These controversies have been acute in small Islamic universities, of which institutional missions are generally quite overt in introducing the Islamic values into the curricula, competing in an increasingly globalized academic market where the English language is inseparable.

Islamization of knowledge (IOK) tries to salvage the contemporary academic fields by basing them on the Islamic epistemologies and ethics (al-Attas 1993 ; al-Faruqi, 1982). This agenda is overlapping with the growing religio-political activism in Bangladesh, with state-led moral education campaigns and social concerns about cultural integrity and westernization as well as moral decay in young people. ES defined as being linked with secular humanism, Western literary canons, and liberal pedagogical traditions, is, in this way, a negotiating zone of ideology. To Islamic universities that desire to preserve religious identity and academic credibility, there is the institutional dilemma of reconciling the perceived contradictions between ES and Islamic worldviews with pedagogical, cultural, and political consequences.

Although the current literature deals with the politics of English, the development of private Islamic universities, and the broader Islamization phenomena, little research has been done to understand how the forces interact in the daily activities of ELL. There are still questions about how the faculty and students balance competing demands, how institutional cultures are translated into curricular and pedagogical decisions, and how the Islamization discourses are put—or not put—into practice.

The paper meets these gaps by discussing the cultural and institutional issues of adopting Islamization principles into ES at two private Islamic universities in Bangladesh. The study examines how English programs are being conceptualized, how religious and academic identities are negotiated, and how sociopolitical narratives influence the functioning of the department with comparative analysis.

Finally, the study adds to general discussions on knowledge production in Muslim-majority societies and the changing role of English in postcolonial educational frameworks and indicates that Islamizing ES is an indication of more significant concerns about cultural sovereignty, globalization, and the future of Bangladesh's higher education.

Literature Review

IOK has always elicited an unending controversy among Muslim thinkers that are interested in harmonizing contemporary academic fields of study with the Islamic epistemological premises. Al-Attas (1993) and Nasr (1996) argued that modern knowledge regimes are historically based on Western secular ontologies and epistemes, which have to be critically reoriented to incorporate Islamic conceptions of reality, ethics, and purpose. Islamization is not a mere superficial insertion of religious factors but a substantive intellectual project of changing the assumptions, values, and objectives of modern scholarship.

Ahsan et al. (2013) referred to Islamization as a disciplined and intellectually challenging process, which obliges Muslim scholars to challenge disciplinary assumptions, epistemic hierarchies, and ontological premises inherent in the modern system of education. Their paradigm stresses the moral and professional role of Muslim scholars in the proactive reconstruction of knowledge using an Islamic perspective.

The Islamization of English language instruction is pursued through pedagogical strategies that integrate Qur'anic narratives, prophetic traditions and biographies of prominent Muslim figures as reading and listening materials, discussion stimuli, and sources for vocabulary and grammatical instruction (Djmadjuri et al., 2023). The Islamization of English literature through the incorporation of Islamic literary texts—including prophetic and Islamic fiction, Nasreddin narratives, and Qur'anic stories. — has been theorized and promoted as a pedagogical resource for literary analysis. (Irwansyah, 2021)

Ahsan, Iqbal, and Ullah (2013) cited a set of structural constraints or factors such as the lack of institutional capacity, the lack of scholars trained in both Islamic sciences and other modern ones, and the fact that the faculty is socialized in secular-academic paradigms. Devoid of the long-term institutional commitment, professional growth, and epistemic coherence, Islamization programs tend to be patchy, symbolic, and policy-based instead of transformative.

Parallel tensions are pointed out in comparative international scholarship. The centralized, state-subsidized system in Malaysia, which was represented most prominently by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), is an attempt to apply Islamic epistemology to modern disciplines but cannot do so without constraints by global accreditation regimes, Western academic standards, and market-oriented reforms that tend to diminish the goals of Islamization (Salam & Hossain, 2025). Compared to that, Indonesia is a decentralized country, which has shown unequal results among institutions. Although there are those universities that effectively combine the Islamic values with secularism-based knowledge and encourage religious moderation, there are also those that face challenges of out-of-date curricula, inadequate competencies, and lack of labor market orientation. (Nasir &Rijal, 2021).

In both Malaysia and Indonesia, globalization and employability pressures are forcing Islamic institutions of higher learning to walk a fine line between maintaining an Islamic

learning agenda and meeting international academic standards. Such pressures frequently create asymmetrical and antagonistic ways of Islamization since the institutions weigh market-driven reforms, accreditation demands, and global competitiveness against epistemic and ethical allegiance based on Islam (Hidayaturrahman et al., 2021).

ES is rooted in the intellectual history of Europe, the relations of European powers of colonies, and secular humanist paradigms. This institutional legacy has institutionalized Eurocentric structures that delegitimize non-Western knowledge systems and re-establish intellectual power structures where Islamic systems of knowledge have an inferior role (Lumbard, 2024). The prevalence of the Western models of curriculum has also encouraged the internalization of the colonial views, which curtails the Islamic epistemology and the ability of Islamic epistemology to gain equal acknowledgment or effective hermeneutical engagement in the discipline (Lumbard, 2025).

Political instability and the erosion of national cohesion and collective harmony have been identified as significant impediments to the process of Islamization (Ahsan et al., 2025). He argued that a weak sense of national identity in Bangladesh could impede the Islamization of economic progress. A robust national spirit, characterized by solidarity, persistence, and a common goal, is crucial in fostering a stable and encouraging atmosphere for economic advancement. In the realm of an Islamization of the economy, a dearth of national spirit may result in a fractured and chaotic business terrain, posing difficulties for the establishment of Islamic financial and commercial practices. As a result, the absence of backing and investment in Islamic finance may hinder the growth and expansion of this sector. It is argued that political instability could also pose significant challenges to establishing the Islamization of the economy in Bangladesh. (Ahsan et al., 2025).

Hasan (2013) insists that it is not possible or productive to wholesale reject English literature to Muslim societies. He proposes a critical approach to analysis in an Islamized, postcolonial way. Through the abrogation and appropriation strategies, the Muslim scholars are able to challenge, contextualize, and redefine the English texts that are in literature in the context of Islamic ethical and epistemological values. This is the strategy that allows focusing on the literary canon selectively without compromising moral integrity and cultural agency.

The hypothesis of the current research is that the ELL of Islamic universities often do not have consistent pedagogical models that can bring together the disciplinary norms and Islamic educational goals. Such lack creates conflicts between international academic standards, regional religious affiliations, and institutional missions. The ensuing gap underscores the necessity of empirical research on how Islamic institutions of higher learning translate the IOK within the disciplines whose foundations of epistemology are mostly Western. To fill this gap, the paper will focus

on how Islamicization is being negotiated and implemented in Bangladesh by two privately owned Islamic universities in their ES programs.

Method

Study Design

The main research problem posed by this paper is that there is a lack of empirical data about how English studies, traditionally based on secular and Western epistemology, are being redefined in terms of Islamization in Bangladesh in the context of the private Islamic universities. The approach to methodology aims at studying the disjuncture between ideological will and the actual practice of academic life and how the institutional actors bargain between the religious, academic, and market-oriented demands.

To deal with this issue, the research followed a qualitative, interpretive multiple-case study design. This method is most appropriate in examining specifics in context, e.g., ideological negotiation and institutional culture, which cannot be quantified. Such focus on two Islamic universities in the private sector allows us to conduct a profound and comparative analysis of the content of the operationalization of Islamization in ES and how similar ideological commitments can have different academic results in varying institutional environments.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data were collected primarily through flexible yet consistent semi-structured interviews. Participants were purposively selected for direct or indirect involvement in Islamization processes. The sample included faculty (N=6) teaching English Language and Literature, students (N=12) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and policymakers (N=4) from governing bodies. Interviews explored pedagogy, curriculum design, Islamic value integration, institutional priorities, policy development, and implementation challenges.

Table:01 : The Profile of Participants

SL	Code	Islamic Background/ General/ Non-Muslims Background	Designation &Organization	Category	Academic Qualification	Sex	Age
1	F-01	Islamic Background[2]	Professor IU-I	Faculty	PhD	Male	60
2	F-02	General[3]	Assoc. Prof. IU-I	Faculty	MA	Female	50
3	F-03	Islamic Background	Asst. Prof. IU-I	Faculty	PhD	Female	42
4	F-04	Islamic Background	Professor IU-II	Faculty	MA	Male	55
5	F-05	General	Assoc. Prof. IU-II	Faculty	PhD	Male	48
6	F-06	Islamic Background	Asst. Prof. IU-II	Faculty	MA	Female	35
7	PS-01	Islamic Background	IU-I	Present Student	MA	Male	22
8	PS-02	General	IU-I	Present Student	MA	Male	23
9	PS-03	Islamic Background	IU-I	Present Student	MA	Female	21
10	PS-04	Hindu	IU-I	Present Student	MA	Female	25
11	PS-05	Islamic Background	IU-II	Present Student	MA	Male	25
12	PS-06	General	IU-II	Present Student	BA	Male	23
13	PS-07	Hindu	IU-II	Present Student	BA	Male	24
14	PS-08	General	IU-II	Present Student	BA	Female	24
15	AS-01	Islamic Background	IU-I	Alumni Student	MA	Female	30
16	AS-02	Islamic Background	IU-I	Alumni Student	PhD	Male	28
17	AS-03	Islamic Background	IU-II	Alumni Student	MA	Male	30

[2]Islamic Background means madrasah background or involved in any Islamic organizations such as Bangladesh Jamaat Islami, Bangladesh Islamic Andolon, Tablighi Jamaat, or who support Islamization of knowledge and education, as defined by the authors.

[3]General here are those who have no madrasah background or who do not support the Islamization of knowledge and education, but in personal life support religious practices as argued by authors.

18	AS-04	Islamic Background	IU-II	Alumni Student	MA	Female	29
19	TM-01	Islamic Background	Professor IU-I	Trust Member	PhD	Male	65
20	TM-02	Islamic Background	Business IU-II	Trust Member	MA	Male	60
21	SM-01	Islamic Background	Professor IU-I	Syndicate Member	PhD	Male	67
22	SM-02	Islamic Background	Assoc. Prof. IU-II	Syndicate Member	MA	Male	58

All interviews took 45-90 minutes, were recorded with permission, and were verbatim transcribed to be analyzed. The semi-structured form also enabled the participants to provide in-depth insights but cover all essential areas of the research.

Document Analysis

Triangulation of the interview data was done by analyzing institutional documents to give a contextual meaning of formal Islamization efforts. Documents included:

- Vision and mission statements and educational goals of the university.

- Syllabus and course outlines, disclosing the direct integration of Islamic values to design the English curriculum.

- Institutional polices and guidelines on the incorporation of Islamic values.

Document analysis was based on language and framing as well as the thematic presentation of Islamization in curriculum and institutional priorities.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data gathered in interviews and documents according to Braun and Clarke (2006). It was done by means of drowning into the data by reading it many times, creating preliminary codes in all sources, and creating themes that would reflect some common and some variant experiences related to the Islamization of the ES. A cross-case analytical approach was then used to bring out similarities and differences in the institutions and provide more insight on how cultural contexts and policy frameworks influence the processes of Islamization

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses a hybrid model that incorporates the IOK paradigm, the postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and organizational culture theory in order to evaluate how ES are reassembled within two Bangladesh-based private Islamic universities. Attempts to reconcile the norms of Western discipline with the principles of Islamic tradition are explicated by the Islamization tradition (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Al-Attas, 1993) and the institutional contestation (Molla, 2014; Pervez, 2016). ES is placed in the context of English postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). Negotiated curricular tensions are emphasized by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), whereas the limits of Islamization are conditioned by missions and market pressures, which are explained by the theory of organizational culture (Tierney, 1988; Scott, 2013).

Findings

Document Analysis: The Roles of IU-II and IU-II in IOELL Departments

In document analysis, there was a collection and comparative analysis of ES syllabi in IU-II and IU-II. Comparisons revealed some similarities and differences in curriculum design, epistemic focus, and Islamic incorporation. The webpage of the institution was also examined to ensure that missions, program goals, and representational strategies are captured so that a triangulated comparison of how the IOELL is explained and operationalized can be made.

Institutional Vision, Mission, and Goals

In its mission and vision, IU-II predicts moral upliftment, ethical sensitivity, justice, and universal human dignity. It incorporates Islamic principles like akhlaq and ihsan in the academic subjects with particular focus on moral perfection, being a responsible member of society, and ethical use of knowledge in the contemporary curriculum. Its educational approach takes a holistic approach, which is a combination of tawhidic epistemology and character building, moral leadership, and civic responsibility.

By comparison, IU-II focuses on integrated learning based on revelation and the centrality of tawhid. It establishes Islam as the main epistemological tool, moral rationale, and intellectual growth. Its mission aims at shaping the personal, academic, and professional identities of the students by identifying with Islamic epistemology. Whereas University I emphasizes ethical development through systematic moral education, University II depends more on curricular development on an epistemic basis.

Islamization of Curriculum and Courses

IU-II uses a very systematic approach in the IOELL curriculum. Its curriculum incorporates the Quran, Hadith, akhlaq, aqidah, the history of Islam, political philosophy, and civilization, as well as mastering Arabic as a means of

academic/professional correspondence. Text of Ethics and Morality I and II, Introduction to Aqidah and Ibadah, Sciences of the Quran and Hadith, Comparative Religion, Political Thought and Social Behavior, Worldview and Civilization, Life and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad, and Survey of Islamic History and Culture are some of the core offerings. This entire model helps the students to study Islamic knowledge in a theoretical, historical, and practical way that promotes moral, intellectual, and linguistic growth.

IU-II, in its turn, has a more specific range of basic religious courses, designed to develop ethical thinking, spiritual sensitivity, and social responsibility. It has a curriculum such as Islam: The Way of Life; Introduction to Ibadah, Akhlaq, and Manners; Biography of Prophet Muhammad and the Eternal Messages; and Political System and Social Justice in Islam. Instead of breadth, University II focuses more on depth in applied ethics and spiritual formation.

Student Mind and Campus Environment Islamization

The Student Affairs Division (STAD) and the Morality Development Program (MDP) allow the university to extend the Islamization outside of the classroom. STAD is the intellectual, moral, and professional development of students, which is organized in activities, training, and mentoring, and instills a sense of ethics in campus life. The MDP has programs like TajweedulQur, Tazkiyah, Concepts of Moral Development, Islamization of Discipline, and Values and Leadership, which are holistically formed. Creativity, ethics, ukhuwah, and discipline are practiced in the English department and the university setting at large.

 The IU-II, its contrary, incorporates the process of Islamization mostly in the curricular content. Whereas there are courses that deal with ethical and spiritual issues in coursework, there are no institutional programs on the level of STAD or MDP. Therefore, University I is more thoroughly Islamized, whereas University II is oriented primarily on moral training in the classroom.

The Roles of Islamic University I and II in the IOELL: Insights from In-Depth Interviews

Faculty, student, and policymaker interviews indicate that IU-II and IU-II have taken systematic measures to Islamize their ELL departments, which have contrasting approaches and results. In general, the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the agenda of Islamization of the universities, but essential differences were revealed in terms of curriculum design, pedagogy, and institutional control.

The general meanings of PS-01-03-05 and AS-01-02-03-04 indicated that the three groups were generally very satisfied with the Islamic subjects introduced using CGED and STAD, which indicated that these curricular components are meaningful in shaping their intellectual formation, moral sensibilities, and personal growth. Even though PS-

06-08 answered with reservation or low involvement, there was an overall feeling that the benefits of these programs are huge, especially in developing the moral reasoning skills, strengthening self-discipline, and fostering a consistent feeling of identity in an Islamic epistemic context.

According to the respondents, there is a large percentage of ELL faculty members at IU-I and IU-II with strong Islamist leanings. It was indicated that a large number of the faculty members had madrasah educational backgrounds or belonged to Islamic political groups, which was seen to enhance their adherence to the pedagogical practices that were oriented towards Islamization. The student body was also described as largely Muslim, with only a few students calling themselves Hindu or Buddhist. As PS-02-07 suggests, these non-Muslim learners tend to feel uncomfortable whenever they are asked to study explicitly Islamic curricular material. Still, most of the respondents argued that the students were generally encouraging of the Islamization programs in their schools and were much more in line with the activities of instilling Islamic principles of teaching and learning through the ELL.

In IU-I, the Islamization project is well standardized and well incorporated in the departmental practices. The faculty members insisted on curriculum development that would connect the Western literature to the Islamic ethics, culture, and spirituality. IU-II, in its turn, exhibits a more lenient attitude to Islamization. Although the values used in Islamic teachings exist in course materials and classroom activity, there is less systematic integration.

F-01, -03, -04, and -06 of both universities observed that they bring out comparative religious and ethical frameworks in teaching canonical Western texts. As an illustration, when they are talking about the Islamic conceptualization of zina (adultery and fornication) in The Scarlet Letter, one of them compares it with the conceptualization of the Christian zina to clarify the contrast in moral epistemology. An additional one went on to add that he deliberately introduces the Islamic views into his classes, including the use of Islamic critique of capitalism in teaching Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. As part of his consideration of the postcolonial theory of Edward Said, he makes Islamization consistent with the larger postcolonial intellectual project and holds that critical interactions with Western colonial heritages are defining of Islamization work.

F-01 clarified, In teaching Shakespeare or Milton, I get the students to consider ethical dilemmas in terms of the Islamic concepts. This renders literature more familiar with their values. The classroom activities and assignments will always foster moral contemplation, and students should work with literary texts in an Islamic ethical framework. PS-01-03-05 and AS-01-03 pointed out that through this integration, they will learn more about their literature and spiritual life. PS-05 observed, "I believe the courses do not simply teach us English; they also teach us how to think about life and ethics in a way that is compatible with our religion." The policymakers (TM-01, TM-01-02, and SM-01-02) validated that there is robust institutional supervision, such as guidelines, faculty training, and monitoring mechanisms, to make sure that they are in line with the Islamization objectives of the university. TM-01 commented, We would

like to have students that are globally competent in English but at the same time rich in Islamic values. All of our curriculum decisions are made because of that balance.

In spite of these strengths, F-02-05 indicated that there were tensions between the freedom of academia and the expectations of the institutions. F-05 told us, "Themes of the western texts are opposed to the Islamic ethics." It is necessary to discuss the topics in a way that does not violate scholarly integrity and Islamic values. However, all these obstacles were perceived to be easy to overcome within a system that would establish both moral consciousness and high standards of scholarship.

Students also valued the integration of Islamic ethical orientations to a great extent but noted inconsistency across courses. In certain classes, there is literature that is linked to the Islamic teachings, and in others, there is the normal English curriculum. Consistency would do wonders in its turn. The policymakers admitted that there is unequal implementation of Islamization initiatives due to faculty autonomy. SM-02 said, "We allow faculty to organize their courses as they see fit, but that in a sense can mean that Islamization is inconsistently applied".

IU-II offers a unified, holistic Islamization experience that includes curriculum, pedagogy, and supervision that are aligned with institutional objectives as compared to IU-I. IU-II is more flexible and autonomous, but there is a threat of unequal integration and dissimilar student experiences. The current issue that both universities have to deal with is the balance between global academics and the mission of Islamization.

The Challenges of IOELL

Divergent Conceptions and Ambiguities of Islamization

F-01-02-F-05-06 stated that differences in conceptions and constant ambiguities about Islamization are significant problems facing the promotion of IOELL in Islamic universities. It has been discovered that a significant portion of the respondents are not aware of how the IOK project has evolved historically. Many are not conversant with the basic works of the major pioneers like Al-Faruqi and Al-Attas.

The majority respondents also had contradictory responses on whether Islamization would be possible in ELL. Some (F-01-03-06) believe that Islamization can and should occur, but others (F-02-05) believe that it is an impossible thing by nature, especially in the sphere of literature. Such conflicts are further aggravated by the fact that even Islamization scholars themselves do not agree on the conceptualizations and approaches to their line of thought, which promote different conceptualizations and methodological frameworks of IOK.

The majority respondents indicate that there has been a lack of cohesive and clearly defined process, which has led to the institutional-level confusion. Some of the respondents were of the view that their Islamic universities have failed to explain in

detail the goals, scope, or working mechanism of the Islamization agenda, thus hindering coherent execution and substantive development.

Epistemic and Curricular Tensions Between Western Canon and Islamic Values

The majority respondents claimed that an epistemic gap is one of the main issues that pose a threat to the implementation of the ES anchored in the western intellectual traditions and the Islamic ethical paradigms the institutions are supposed to prefigure. Faculty are known to have trouble when teaching texts that are concerned with the themes of sexuality, secular humanism, or liberal individualism. Reactions are diverse, such as selective omission of controversial materials, weak treatment of theoretical approaches, such as feminism or psychoanalysis, or remaking texts by contrasting ethical positions. Students have their good and bad reactions: some students value ethical contextualization, and others consider selective filtering as narrowing the disciplinary scopes. In most instances, integration is superficial, where Islamic values are mentioned in course descriptions or course outcomes, but the core reading lists and theoretical modules do not change much.

Pedagogical Negotiation in Classroom Practice

The majority faculties and students indicated that Islamization is mainly practiced in day-to-day teaching. In their view most faculty Faculty use pragmatic approaches like starting lessons with Islamic meditations, making moral analogies between Islamic lessons and literary themes, or putting the material in Islamic frames of reference. These practices pose adaptive strategies to balance the institutional demands against the norms of disciplines instead of progressive pedagogical changes; yet, as F-02-05 and PS-06 observe, students are negotiating between the two demands of the formation of morality and the hope of cosmopolitan futures and employability in the world. Reactions to pedagogical Islamization differ: some students love the fact that it makes the context more relevant, while others complain that they feel over-filtered regarding dealing with controversial or challenging subjects. As a result of this, the classroom is a dynamic location where there is mutual negotiation between moral commitments, disciplinary discipline, and global academic desires.

Institutional and Sociopolitical Forces Shaping Implementation Capacity

F-01, TM-01-02, and SM-01-02 mentioned that structural constraints have a significant mediating effect on the way Islamization takes place. According to administrators, a problem lies in hiring a faculty that has been trained in both ES and Islamic epistemology to facilitate systematic integration. There is a lack of professional development, and quality assurance committees do not usually have the knowledge to judge Islamization initiatives, leading to unequal implementation. These internal limitations are overlapping with socio-political pressures: on the one hand, parents insist on the morally safe conditions; on the other, the higher education market insists

on the global legitimacy. Institutions tend to have rhetorical obligations towards Islamization, which they selectively use as branding or marking. Comprehensively, Islamization operates concurrently as ideology, pedagogy, institutional identity, and branding, which are predetermined by structural constraints, agency of faculties, student expectations, and sociopolitical dynamics as opposed to coherent institutional systems.

Faculty Capacity Gaps in the IOELL

The problem of Islamization in Bangladeshi ES is restricted by a lack of Islamically trained faculty in Bangladeshi Islamic universities. The majority of them are in favor of Islamization, but they are not trained or have formal degrees, and they are not engaged with research, and therefore their support is rather normative than competent, as per systematic theoretical or methodological skills.

PS-01-02-03-05-06, on the other hand, asserted that academic individuals in faculties that teach Islamic studies are usually not well acquainted with ELL as a subject, its critical theories, literature, and academic styles. Such a disciplinary distance inhibits effective interdisciplinary cooperation and prevents the creation of combined pedagogy. They even noticed in certain instances that the instructional procedures and delivery modes of the Islamic studies professors seem old and not well aligned to the modern academic requirements of ELL, even though it was also noted that some Islamic studies professors are very competent, academically demanding, and instructionally proficient.

When combined, these knowledge inequities between the faculty of ES and Islamic Studies produce an organizational imbalance that compromises the systematic and consistent IOELL. The lack of sufficiently trained scholars who can mediate between the two worlds strengthens the disjointed execution of the same and restricts the comprehensiveness and sustainability of the Islamization efforts in the institutional context.

Regulatory Constraints and Limited Autonomy from UGC and the Ministry of Education

F-01-03-04-06 and TM-01-02 indicated that one of the major institutional obstacles to the Islamization of ES in the Islamic universities is the insufficient supportive rules and regulative flexibility provided by the UGC and the Ministry of Education. The same regulatory framework used to govern secular private universities is also in use in Islamic universities in Bangladesh, so that they have little opportunity to develop curricula that would support their unique religious mission. Administrators and faculty say that UGC sometimes acts in a manner that directly constrains Islamization efforts.

F-01 and TM-01 said: in IU-I, a course on Arabic, carried a quote of a comment by retired Chief Justice S. K. Sinha, terming an Arabic course as anti-state and directing it to be revised immediately. In counterreaction, the university substituted Arabic courses in all departments, ELL included, with more neutral courses on morality. This

accident made everything institutional more sensitive to regulatory control and generated a sense that Islamically oriented course material might be placed under external scrutiny or penalties.

Majorities respondents asserted even more that UGC periodically demands that all the privately run universities should provide a standardized set of general education and discipline-specific courses based on the secular academic standards. According to Islamic universities, such demands result in the fact that their use of English on the same level as the secular institutions would mean that they cannot entrench Islamic epistemology or value-based material in systematic or discipline-specific senses. These pressures contribute to the symbolic-substantive split of Islamization: although institutions do not change their public pledges to the Islamic identity, the domain of curriculum flexibility is very slim and inconsistent and can be easily compromised by outside interference.

Politicized Secularization and the Volatile Policy Environment as Barriers to Islamization

The majority respondents noted that the main obstacle to the Islamization of the ES in the Islamic universities in Bangladesh is the wider sociopolitical environment inclined by the aggressive secularization policies of the previous Awami League government. The government agencies and the regulatory bodies, especially the UGC and the agents of the Ministry of Education during its tenure, had been reported to have carried out an invasive control over the Islamic universities. In the testimony of TM-01-2 and SM-01-02 in various cases, visiting officials described Islamically oriented courses as terrorist or radicalizing content and threatened institutional leaders with potential punitive actions, such as being shut down. Such moves created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that made universities not adopt Islamization projects in their academic programs, even in the ES.

The majority respondents noted that the political turmoil that erupted in July 2024 and caused a breakdown of the Awami League government has increased the level of uncertainties already experienced in the higher education sector. F-01-06 stated that despite the presence of an interim government, it has yet to put in place any regulatory frameworks or policy guidelines that could have allowed Islamic universities to embark on the Islamization of the curricula in a free and orderly way. Therefore, the success of any Islamization initiative depends mostly on institutional will and internal capability.

The majority respondents asserted that simultaneously, even Islamic universities have not presented scientifically structured, policy-focused postulates in order to state their unique mission, to institutionalize the epistemic rationale of Islamization, or to petition institutional liberty to redesign the curriculum in accordance with their original identity. Consequently, the lack of clear governmental guidelines collides with the lack of coordinated advocacy and policy readiness of the institutions, which enhances a twofold barrier. The combined efforts of the external political climate and internal institutional stasis are impediments to long-term development of further Islamizing English departments, including the ELL courses, which will need the ability to

coherently justify their epistemology and secure curricular space to enable effective integration.

Discussion

IOK and Epistemic Reorientation

The IOK paradigm (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Al-Attas,1993) offers a descriptive perspective on the epistemic ambition of the two Islamic universities, I and II. IU-I is an illustration of an interdisciplinary, comprehensive way of achieving the Islamic principles in the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and even campus life, which is a tawhidic epistemology reaffirmed in IOK theory. The incorporation of ethics, Arabic literacy, history, and civics depicts an attempt to reform the ES of Western origin back to the Islamic epistemic codes. The epistemic approach adopted by IU-II, with its emphasis on depth, moral reasoning, and spiritual formation, represents a more subtle approach, with identity formation being the primary concern, rather than the breadth of the curriculum. Both instances indicate the mediating role of institutional design, faculty capacity, and regulatory constraints in the epistemic Islamization process, which confirms the fact that Islamization is a contested and institutionally contingent process (Molla, 2014 and Pervez, 2016).

Postcolonial Perspectives and the Legacy of ES

According to postcolonial theory, ELL is a field that is characterized by a colonial past and the symbolic power of colonialism, which lingers (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). In the presentations of the findings, both universities struggle with the tensions between the Western canonical texts and the Islamic ethical obligations, which proves the epistemic and cultural dissonance of the postcolonial critique. Faculty are also selective in their engagement or interpretation of Western literary texts, and they also use ethical contextualization to reduce the perceived ideological conflict. The double standards of students, who are formed ethically and at the same time become globally academically competent, are the characteristics of the postcolonial situation when the ES remains the source of symbolic capital and at the same time has to negotiate culturally and religiously. Such unequal and selective integration into the curriculum portrayed in both institutions is a struggle to decolonize the curriculum epistemically without having to compromise disciplinary authority.

Critical Pedagogy and Classroom Negotiation

Critical pedagogy centers on the classroom and defines it as a place of negotiation and dialogue between the institutional requirements and student power (Freire, 1970). At university, I, as faculty, use dialogical practices actively and make literary analysis relevant to Islamic ethical schemes and stimulate student reflection, which is characteristic of emancipatory pedagogy that connects the expectations of religious and globalized academes. Although University II is more fluctuating in its application, it is the same way it shows negotiation between the curriculum and ethical formation, where the faculty is able to adjust teaching to accommodate Western canonical

standards and Islamic values. These practices highlight the fact that Islamization is practiced not only through institutionalized curriculum frameworks but also through informal, context-based pedagogic modalities based on the needs of students as well as epistemic conflicts.

Organizational Culture and Institutional Mediation

The organizational culture theory (Tierney, 1988; Scott, 2013) explains the kind of institutional influences that affect Islamization, such as the form of governance, policy, and the influence of sociopolitics. The institutional culture of ethics formation may be said to be in University I through its integrated programs like STAD and MDP, whereas University II tends to be more discretionary in its faculty based on cultural orientations in organizational structures. The curricular autonomy is defined by regulatory restrictions that are set by the UGC and the Ministry of Education, as well as the unstable political climate that defines the viable boundaries of Islamization. Institutional decision-making is also affected by market pressures and community expectations, which explain how Islamization can be both an epistemic project and a branding, identity, and legitimacy organizing strategy.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the IOELL in Islamic universities in Bangladesh is a complex, multidimensional process shaped by epistemic, pedagogical, institutional, and sociopolitical factors. IU-I and IU-II exemplify contrasting yet complementary approaches: IU-I implements a structured, holistic strategy integrating Islamic values across curricula, co-curricular programs, and campus life, emphasizing ethical formation, Arabic literacy, historical consciousness, and moral leadership; IU-II prioritizes depth, focusing on moral reasoning, spiritual awareness, and identity formation through selected courses but lacks comparable campus-wide programs or systematic oversight.

Despite these initiatives, both universities face substantial challenges. These include a shortage of Islamically oriented faculty, regulatory constraints imposed by the UGC and Ministry of Education, and a volatile sociopolitical environment shaped by prior secularization policies. Curricular integration is often uneven, with Islamization occurring more at the level of symbolic framing than substantive transformation of disciplinary content. Faculty navigate epistemic tensions between Western canonical texts and Islamic ethical frameworks through adaptive pedagogical strategies, while students negotiate the dual imperatives of moral formation and global academic competence.

A critical synthesis of these findings indicates that Islamization in ELL is inherently contingent and negotiated, reflecting the dynamic interplay between institutional vision, faculty expertise, classroom practices, regulatory oversight, and broader sociopolitical pressures. University I illustrates that holistic, institutionally embedded integration can achieve coherence across epistemic and pedagogical domains, whereas

University II demonstrates the strengths and limitations of curriculum-centered approaches emphasizing depth over breadth. Collectively, these cases underscore that meaningful IOELL requires coordinated alignment across epistemic, pedagogical, and organizational dimensions, calibrated to the postcolonial, market-driven, and politically contested realities of higher education in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

Strengthening Faculty Capacity

ELL must be substantively Islamized by investing in faculty development. The instructors need to be endowed with professional development programs that will provide them with rigorous knowledge of Islamic epistemology, ethical paradigms, and integrative pedagogical frameworks so that they can systematically incorporate Islamic perspectives beyond being symbolically incorporated. The mechanisms of collaboration between the faculty of ELL and Islamic studies are essential to develop the curricula, syllabus, teaching materials, and assessment standards that preserve the rigor of discipline but are based on Islamization principles.

Enhancing Curriculum Design and Integration

Islamic moral and intellectual views should be incorporated into the curricular reform in the foundational coursework and not as an isolated product. Courses on Islamic intellectual tradition, Muslim rhetorical tradition, and comparative civilizational philosophy would put Western canonical literature in perspective, creating balanced and epistemically sound curricula.

Institutionalizing Holistic Programs

Ethical, moral, and spiritual growth should be incorporated in campus-wide programs along with academic training. STAD-style and MDP-style programs have the potential to foster ethical culture, mentoring, leadership, and service-learning programs and strengthen Islamic values in the personal and civic self-concept of students.

Advocating for Regulatory Flexibility

To facilitate meaningful Islamization of English studies, Islamic universities should be granted enhanced curricular autonomy within the frameworks of national higher education policy. Engagement with the Ministry of Education and the emerging Bangladesh Higher Education Commission, as outlined in the draft *Bangladesh Higher Education Commission Ordinance, 2025*, should be pursued through empirically grounded proposals and clear epistemological justifications.

Promoting Pedagogical Innovation

The faculty must use dialogical and contextual methods that allow the students to interrogate Western texts critically using the lenses of Islamic ethics. Collective

teaching materials, guides, and pedagogical tools would facilitate consistency and quality of courses.

Monitoring and Evaluating Islamization Efforts

Curriculum audits, student feedback, and peer review must be conducted as part of constant quality assurance. Tracking of ethical dispositions of the graduates and professional capabilities longitudinally gives information to perfect strategies.

Leveraging Technology and Global Networks

Online sources and online education, as well as intercultural interaction, can be increased through digital means. Collaboration with foreign Islamic organizations makes it easier to benchmark, share knowledge, and adopt best practices, and this increases the global applicability of ELL programs in Islamic universities.

Research Limitations and Future Research

The research is insufficient, as it is confined to two private universities in Bangladesh, and this can limit the generalization of the study to other institutions and subjects. It is based on qualitative data using documents and interviews, which is very insightful but not reflective of the experiences of more students or longitudinal outcomes. Another weakness of the study is the absence of comparative analysis with international institutions, including the IIUM, that would put the approaches of Bangladesh into perspective. Results indicate a particular socio-political situation, and the views of faculty members or students can be subjective.

Future studies may be extended to the multiple universities and disciplines, international comparisons, the implementation of quantitative or longitudinal research to evaluate the performance of students, and faculty training and institutional assistance of the Islamization. Policy effects and lived experiences of students might shed more light on the process of integration, experience, and negotiation of Islamic epistemology in higher education.

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