

## IIUC: A Private University with a Difference

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The Private Universities Act was passed in 1992 as a result of persistent efforts of a group of persons dedicated to the progress of education in the country. At that time the Public Universities funded by the government were not in a good shape. Mostly because of political reasons, the quality of education deteriorated, classes were not being held regularly, besides there was long 'session jam' and also widespread violence leading to many deaths. There were also other problems of finance and management and lack of adequate and qualified teachers. In this context the government allowed the establishment of Private Universities so that the students can study in a terror free and 'session jam' free atmosphere and the tendency of the students to go out of the country for studies is contained.

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) got its charter in 1995 (at that time known as Islamic University Chittagong) and its main campus is in Chittagong (which is being shifted now from Chittagong city to its permanent campus at Kumira) and its second campus was set up in Dhaka on 1st January 2000. It offers undergraduate courses in Computer Science, Business Administration and Shariah Sciences. IIUC is a Private University with a difference.

At this stage it is appropriate to discuss the history of Islamic Education Movement in modern times. Islamic Education Movement, which is otherwise widely known as the Movement for the Islamization of Knowledge, as a new phenomenon started its journey sometime in 1977. A group of scholars thought that the educational system in the Muslim World is not fulfilling the needs of the Muslim countries and that it should be thoroughly revised and updated. In this backdrop, the first Islamic Educational World Conference was held in Makkah in 1977 in which more than 300 academicians, scholars and intellectuals participated. The first conference made certain significant recommendations for the Islamization of Knowledge. Later more such conferences were held in other parts of the world in which clerics, academicians, scholars and intellectuals of various countries joined.

As the outcome of painstaking efforts of learned scholars of various disciplines to formulate a pragmatic Islamic Education Policy through the Islamic education conferences and contribution of eminent Islamic organizations and individuals, the first Islamic University, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), was established.

Later more Islamic universities have been established in other parts of the world following the model of IIUM. One such university has been established in Islamabad, Pakistan, another in Uganda in Africa and another in Kushtia, Bangladesh. It must be admitted that Islamic University Kushtia has, to some extent, lost direction, because of political environment within the country, and the University could not make much headway following the model of IIUM. Nevertheless it has to be accepted that Islamic University Kushtia also made some contribution in the Islamization of Education and Islamization of Knowledge. Later Darul Ihsan University and Islamic University Chittagong were established with the same mission.

To many it remains a question why Islamization of Education is important and this demands an in-depth examination and critical and careful analysis. Islamization of Education is significant because the root cause of all problems and malaise of the Ummah, the Muslim community, is education.

One principal reason for the crisis of the present civilization is that ethical and spiritual values did not receive the importance they deserved for inclusion in the academic syllabus and curriculum of most advanced countries for at least one hundred years. As an outcome of this disrespect to eternal moral values, our educational institutions have produced violent and cruel men devoid of love, affection, fraternity, brotherhood and fellow feeling. What has happened in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Iraq, Kashmir, Afghanistan and more recently in Gujarat in India is the result of modern education, which has produced cruel and violent men. Modern man is not imbued with the eternal humane values and therefore most sophisticated nations do not mind to bomb unarmed civilians, women and children. Nobody can hope to change this sorry state of affairs, and improve the face of modern civilization unless the educational curriculum is restructured and emphasis given on moral and ethical values.

What is, therefore, required to reorganize education on the foundation of ethical principles and combine moral education with professional necessity. Professional excellence has to be integrated with morality and ethics, which basically can be derived from religion.

The task of the entire humankind is to think and reflect on how to restructure the educational system and not to give excessive emphasis only on professional knowledge for it we do so then we shall only produce robot and not man with soul and values. In fact we have to structure educational system in such a way, for all nations in all countries worldwide, which shall integrate professional knowledge with ethics and morality. It should however be made clear that the establishment of a Islamic University does not mean that the door of such educational institutions shall remain closed for the non-Muslims. Islamic University is open, for all. Any student can study in such a university and the teachings of Islam shall not be imposed on the non-Muslim students. Non-Muslim students shall have to study only the educational program including University Requirement Courses. It needs to be further examined whether non-Muslim students can be offered optional subjects in some disciplines or areas.

IIUC has been established with the above philosophy and objective in mind. It is pursuing this mission with earnestness.

The Private Universities have now become a very important part of our educational system. They deserve serious attention by the Government so that they become the center of excellence as universities should be. They should be run on non-profit basis so that the people can derive full benefit from these universities. Moreover, higher education should not be turned into a business. At the same time these universities should be kept out of bureaucratic control so that they can develop in freedom. I hope the above suggestions would get appropriate attention of the Government.