

Workshops and Conferences

Workshops on Islamization of Disciplines

During the last quarter a number of workshops were organized in the International Islamic University Malaysia in order to review the prevailing teaching-learning situation in the context of the main goal of the University—Islamization of Knowledge. Each of the Human Science departments organized a workshop in which the general theoretical aspects of the Islamization process were discussed, along with the specific problems of that discipline. All such workshops had a session to discuss the courses and teaching, and how to improve them.

Department of Communication

The first workshop of the series was organised by the Department of Communication. The objectives were two-fold: to enable the participants to understand the rationale, meaning, methodology and principles of Islamic communication; and to review the present state of Islamization of curriculum as reflected in the course description and examinations of the department.

The first session consisted of three major presentation. The first was by Prof. Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Deputy Rector (Academic Affairs) of the University, who outlined the philosophical premises for Islamization of human knowledge. According to him, they are as follows:

1. Allah (SWT) is the supreme source of true knowledge;
2. Life is a service for humanity in the name of Allah;
3. Human knowledge is an *amānah* which has to be used in accordance with the commandments of Allah;
4. Reason has to be guided by divine revelation and revealed values and criteria; and

5. Western dominance and secularization of human knowledge should be regarded as a challenge to all Muslim scholars.

Prof. Mohd. Kamal went on to define Islamization of Knowledge as "a process of developing, generating and promoting human knowledge which is in harmony with revelation." According to him Islamization involves not only development in knowledge, but also development in the personality of the knowledge-users as well.

Prof. Mohd. Kamal felt that the process of Islamization would involve the following steps:

1. A process of understanding;
2. A process of rejection;
3. A process of critical evaluation and appreciation;
4. A process of sifting, filtering and elimination;
5. A process of reconstruction.

Prof. Kamal stressed that Islamization of knowledge is not a demolition exercise, it is rather an exercise of reconstruction.

The second scholar to address this meeting was Dr. Louay Safi, who began his presentation by pointing out that modern knowledge has been formed and shaped by the West, and hence reflects Western values and ethos. Concepts and theories in Western knowledge, according to Dr. Louay, have been derived from Western experience and history, and the West has presented them to us as possessing global truth and applicability. He stressed that there is a need for looking at the special characteristics of the Muslim experience, and developing our own theories in the light of these experiences.

Our initial Islamization activities, according to Dr. Louay should focus on metaphysical presuppositions of science, as well as concepts and theories which reflect Western experience. They need a critical examination which would involve a process of rejection, as well as a process of reconstruction.

As regards Islamization of the curriculum, Dr. Louay said that the process involves achieving academic excellence, as well as bringing in Islamic content. Excellence or *ihsān* is the highest value which a believer has to realize, and for a Muslim academician it must be translated into academic excellence. Academic excellence in curriculum can be achieved by:

1. Increasing the amount of reading and assignments;
2. Avoiding repetitions and overlapping in course topics and materials; and
3. Increasing the complexity and sophistication of the courses offered at different levels of study.

Dr. Louay also called for increasing Islamicity of our course content. This could be done by:

1. Critically examining the Western sciences and our Islamic heritage;
2. Integrating Islamic ideas and values into the discipline;
3. Inclusion of "Islamization of knowledge" materials in our course content; and
4. Bringing Islamic concerns to the awareness of the students.

Prof. Dr. Mohd. Yusof Hussain, Head, Department of Communication said that communication scholars and practitioners in the Islamic world today are very much influenced by western ideas about communication. This is because communication as an academic discipline was born in the West. It was first taught as a subject in the United States in the Departments of English. The first Department of Journalism was established in the United States after the Second World War. This and other schools of communication, established later, produced scholars who later taught and influenced students from a number of developing countries, including the Islamic world. They also produced books and wrote journal articles which continued to influence and shape the thoughts and attitudes of communication scholars and practitioners in the Islamic world. A number of the ideas and thoughts of these Western scholars especially regarding the practice, principles and ethics of communication are not in line with Islam and therefore need to undergo Islamization.

Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Heritage

The department organized a two-day workshop at the beginning of September. The objectives of the workshop, as explained by Dr. Thameem Ushama, the Head of the Department of IRKH, were: to discuss the philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge in relation to IRKH curriculum; to examine the past question papers in order to review the extent of Islamization they reflected; and to examine and propose new packages of courses for Bachelors and Masters Programmes.

Three presentations provided a framework for the deliberations of the day. The Dean of the Faculty, Dr. Sidek Baba, noted a far-reaching positive impact of the integration approach of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) on the Malaysian education scene. Prof. Dr. Mohd Kamal Hassan, the Deputy Rector (Academic) IIUM, viewed that the Islamization of Knowledge implied that academicians should refrain from the dogmatic methods of teaching.

Dr. Louay M. Safi observed that the notion of Islamization was evident in the Islamic principles and values that were the driving source in the society. Islamization of Knowledge dealt with beliefs, values and principles that guided the social structure. The Prophets had the mission to transform the beliefs and value-systems of people according to revealed message. The task of the Prophets was inherited by 'Ulemā' (academicians). The *Sharī'ah* sciences were concerned with the understanding of the guiding principles and enlightening notions of revelation. That in turn required application of *dalālat* and 'illah which are central to self-exertion (*ijtihād*). Thus Islamization of *sharī'ah* sciences could be pursued by understanding the methods for deriving new rules and applying them in new circumstances.

During the question-answer session, Prof. Mohd Kamal Hassan identified three crucial stages for Islamization of curriculum as: academic excellence (*ihsān*), designing course content, and evaluation of teachers and students.

Prof. Dr. Abdul Khaliq Kazi, Deputy Dean, IRKH (Academic) explained the methodology for evaluation of the Masters' Curriculum. It was realized that the whole structure of the programme needed change in order to reflect the contemporary situation in the context of *Maqāsid*. The curriculum in its existing shape was viewed to be inflexible, without any provision for specialization, but with an undue emphasis on an even treatment to English and Arabic as mediums of instruction. He proposed a curriculum outline with three areas of specialization, and thesis research.

A number of suggestions were made about the content and treatment of different courses. It was proposed that the stress on bilingualism be reconsidered.

Dr. Abdullahi Hassan Zaroug gave a briefing about the curriculum of the undergraduate studies in the Department. The new package was criticized for not having any clear objectives. Specific suggestions were advanced about a number of courses related to *Tafsīr*, *Hadīth*, and

‘Aqīdah. The participants proposed a number of measures to make the learning process more effective, engaging the students in meaningful intellectual exercise, and discouragement of the trends of plagiarism.

Some participants pointed out that substantial adjustments should be introduced in the courses offered to the IRKH students by the Kulliyyahs of Laws and Economics. The Department took note of the suggestion which will lead to the revision of the content of a number of courses, introduction of new courses, and integration of courses keeping in view the mission of Islamization of Knowledge.

Department of Psychology

The seminar, held on 22 September 1995, was aimed at discussing issues regarding Islamization of psychology, including curriculum revision, identification of priority areas for research, and conduct of future conferences and seminars. An attempt was also made to identify reading material in this area.

The first session focused on issues of Islamization of social sciences with particular reference to psychology.

In his opening remarks Prof. Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan emphasized the need for developing a curriculum that conforms to the Islamic perspectives about human nature and intellect. He said that this is the most challenging task which the Ummah faces.

Dr. Abdullahi Hassan Zaroug dealt with foundational and methodological issues about Islamization. He deliberated on questions like: Why is Islamization of social sciences needed? What is the meaning of Islamization of social sciences? What are the main areas and problems, which need the immediate attention of Muslim psychologists.

Professor Zaroug said that Islamization of social sciences means, at an elementary level, making social sciences consistent with revelation. At a higher level, it means, deducing social sciences from revelation, reason and experience.

Discussing the relation between social sciences and revelation, he said that the relation can be characterized by either separation, identity or overlap. According to Ibn Taymiyyah all statements can fall into one of the following categories: (i) things that can only be known by revelation; (ii) things that can only be known by reason and experience; (iii) things known by both reason and revelation; and (iv) things possible to be known by either or both.

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the conflict between reason and revelation can be solved as follows:

1. Check the truth of the statements in both reason and revelation;
2. Try to reconcile between the two by finding reasonable interpretations for both. If both of the above attempts fail, then measure the degree of certainty of each. The following are the possibilities:
 - a. If both are certain, there will be no contradiction because truth can not contradict truth;
 - b. If the statement of revelation is certain and statement of social science is probable, then you should accept the statement of revelation;
 - c. If statement of social science is certain and the statement of revelation is probable, then you should accept the statement of social science.
 - d. If both are probable then you should accept the one with the higher probability.

The degree of certainty of a statement from the Qur'ān depends on the degree of certainty of its meaning. The degree of certainty of *Hadīth* depends on the degree of certainty of its *thubūt* (authenticity) and the degree of certainty of its meaning. The authenticity depends on *sanad* and *matn* validity. If the *sanad* is certain then we will not examine the *matn*.

Speaking next, Dr. Louay M. Safi emphasized the importance of psychology within human sciences as one of the three core disciplines—the others being sociology and philosophy. He stressed that the purpose of Islamization of social sciences was to provide humans with guidance and direction. The disciplines had to start with some assumptions, premises or presuppositions. The question is where do these assumptions originate from, and how have they been formulated.

Referring to various psychological models, Dr. Safi attempted to highlight the assumptions that underlie them. Islamization of Knowledge is meant to replace the fictitious assumptions with the understanding of human nature based on revelation. The primary purpose is to provide insights and meanings to the overall ontological existence, not to restructure the temporal and empirical existence. Such endeavours must be rooted in an understanding of revelation. Revelation provides guidance and insight into the human psyche and the nature of human beings. In order to receive guidance from revelation, one needs to be methodical

and systematic. Any arbitrary attempt to derive principles from revelation cannot be accepted as part of Islamization of Knowledge.

Dr. Louay Safi argued that revelation is not the only source of knowledge for psychological reasoning in the pursuit for Islamization. In addition to revelation, nature and society are two additional sources of knowledge, he contended. He stressed that Muslim psychologists should have interdisciplinary outlook. He added that induction should be applied not only to psychosocial phenomena but also to revelation itself, so that the Qur'anic injunctions should be rendered into some general principles through a gradual process of abstraction. Revelation and history can provide general notions and principles for the process.

Theory formation and testing through experimentation is a legitimate legacy of psychology, and it need not be discredited because we are trying to develop Islamic psychology. Such testing, however, should be based both on history and revelation. This would provide us with the framework for psychological understanding. Dr. Louay proposed strategies for the process of Islamization of psychology. While the overall goal is to transform psychological knowledge, we must have a modest beginning before taking any major leap. In this process nothing should be adopted or rejected *a priori*. Further, we have to examine critically not only the western psychology, but also those psychological writings and notions that one finds in the Muslim heritage. There is a great deal in the Muslim heritage which needs to be critically examined.

The second session, chaired by Dr. Zafar A. Ansari, focused on curriculum revision in three important areas of psychology. Reports, prepared by committees which were specially constituted for this purpose, were presented in the seminar. The reports were presented by Prof. Dr. Nizar Alani (Psychology of Personality), Dr. Noraini Mohd Noor (Social Psychology), and Dr. Abbas Hussein Ali (History and Systems of Psychology).

The third session was dedicated to identification of priority areas for research, conferences and seminars. This session was chaired by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Achoui. Prof. Dr. Mahfooz A. Ansari, in his opening statement, identified the following priority areas for research: development of bibliographies with abstracts in English and Arabic, theory development and hypothesis testing based on Islamic perspectives, applied research for the well-being of the *Ummah*, and Islamic management. He emphasized team research, and improving the quality of research.

He proposed a series of seminars at departmental, Kulliyah, national and international levels. Theme-based workshops were also proposed.

The last session, chaired by Dr. Mahfooz A. Ansari, was related to development of reading materials through compilations, translations, original monographs, and textbooks. The opening remarks by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Achoui emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive database. The topics worth consideration included: epistemology from an Islamic perspective, concepts of psyche and *al-nafs*, Muslim thought in relation to social problems of the day, and the contributions of early Muslim scholars to psychology.

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