

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT NIGERIA OFFICE



MANUAL ON
ISLAMIZATION
OF KNOWLEDGE



Edited by
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MODULE FOUR

ISLAMIC RESEARCH METHODS AND RESEARCH AREAS IN ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Unit 1: Critique of the Conventional Research Method

Unit 2: The Need for the Islamic Research Method

Unit 3: The Salient Features of the Islamic Research

Unit 4: Typical Research Areas in Islamization of Knowledge

Activity III	
1. Read the text on the need for the Islamic research method in Islam.	
2. In the text, the author has mentioned the need for the Islamic research method. Do you think it is still relevant in the 21st century?	

MODULE FOUR

ISLAMIC RESEARCH METHODS AND RESEARCH AREAS IN ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

Attempts to explore new fields of study or the means of making available new and reliable information constitute what is called research. It is a means of finding solutions to an existing problem. The need to have a critique of the conventional research method becomes imperative, considering the fact that Allah encourages man to develop a critical mind. If Allah enjoins man to critically examine some issues in the Qur'an, then Muslims are under strong obligation to critically examine all other human theories.

Objectives

The objectives of this unit are:

- To examine the conventional research methods with a view to considering their relevance to Islamic research method;
- To identify the shortcomings in the conventional research method;
- To extend the scope of the conventional research method beyond its present materialistic tendency; and
- To provide an alternative methodological framework based on Islamic paradigm.

Scope

This module is designed to look at the conventional research method with a view to offering an Islamic perspective of it. It also discusses the need for an Islamic research method, as well as outlines the salient features of Islamic research methodology.

Unit 1: Critique of the Conventional Research Method

The one-sidedness of the conventional research method is borne out of the fact that educational system itself is epistemologically materialistic in nature at the expense of the realization of the world beyond. As such, man's intellect, psyche, senses and material world constitute the pendulum upon which its researches and research methodologies revolved. However, the all-inclusive and all-encompassing nature of knowledge in Islam are appreciated when one considers the fact that man is both physical and spiritual in nature. His endowment with sense organs for observation, investigation and reasoning is an indication that knowledge could be sourced from rational thinking and other scientific means. That notwithstanding, idolization of such means arises when one strongly disowns or does not recognize the existence of other forms of sourcing knowledge and so embraces empiricism with no consideration for its feasibility and fallibility.

Among such problems inherent in the conventional research methods are:

1. The non-recognition of *Wahy* as an impeccable and infallible source of knowledge;
2. The arrogance of the conventional research method is demonstrated in its over reliance upon human whims and caprices with no regard for any supernatural being or power. Humanism and atheism are identified as underlying philosophies of this approach. By humanism, man develops absolute reliance upon human intellect and senses and gives no metaphysical being the opportunity to have any impact on him. Atheism on the other hand means the total rejection of God and any other metaphysical or supernatural being. This is known as *shirk* in Islam.
3. The Dichotomy between *Aqli* and *Wahyi* knowledge: The compartmentalization of knowledge into *Aqli* and *Wahyi* have been considered as a great threat to true Islamic knowledge in the Muslim world. The system succeeded in producing two groups of scholars namely: scholars who are trained to believe that acquisition of the Western values and civilization is the only means through which one can prosper in this world and that religious values have no useful impacts on his life. The other group believes that unless one holds tenaciously to religious values and abstains

totally from having any contact with Western values, he could not attain felicity in this world and hereafter. The effect of this is the production of two sets of people—faithless people who have nothing to do with religion yet dominating the most influential positions of authority; and people who contribute little or nothing to human and environmental development but becoming heroes in socio-religious gatherings.

4. Non-Recognition of the Weaknesses of the Tools of Researches:

The dominant methodological framework in conventional research is man's intellect. Non-recognition of the weaknesses and limitations of sense perception, reason and experience—the only empiricist tools for deriving knowledge—is a serious setback of the conventional research method. This is because it is easier for someone who acknowledges his ignorance to adjust, than someone who thinks he knows whereas he does not know. In short, a weak tool will produce nothing but a weak result. Little wonder then that scholars have recorded volumes of the shortcomings of the method.

5. Inconsistency in its Findings: A manifestation of the shortcoming of the conventional research method is the multifarious theories on certain issues. There are as many theories as there are theorists, philosophers and thinkers on one particular issue. This leads to confusion, because an acceptable theory today becomes obsolete tomorrow.

Activity I

1. Mention some of the shortcomings of the conventional research method?
2. What are the impacts of the dichotomy between *Aqli* and *Wahyi* knowledge in the conventional research method?

Summary

In this unit you have learnt about the problems of the conventional research method. Some of the problems inherent in the conventional research method include the non-recognition of *wahy* as an impeccable and infallible source of knowledge, the dichotomy between *Aqli* and *Wahyi* knowledge, non-recognition of the weaknesses of the tools of researches and inconsistency in its findings.

Unit 3: The Salient Features of the Islamic Research

So far, a critical examination of the conventional research method has been considered, and then the need for the Islamic research method has been ascertained. It is now pertinent to discuss the salient features of the Islamic research method that make it unique over and above all conventional one.

One salient feature of the Islamic research method is the tools by which knowledge is obtained. Firstly, Islam recognizes the involvement of the heart (Qalb), the intellect (Aql) and the senses (Al-hiss) as essential organs and tools by which knowledge can be acquired. Though these organs have their limitations and deficiencies, they are useful instruments for observation, imagination, perception and experimentation. They therefore, represent the recognition of the scientific method in Islam. Through it, inspirations or revelations are received from God, the Lord of knowledge. Thus, as against the conventional research method which relies solely on human intellect and gives no recognition to revelation as a source of knowledge, Islamic method of research recognizes revelation as the most reliable source of knowledge.

Another feature unique to Islamic research method is that the purpose of research is all encompassing, as it is not limited to meeting the material needs of this world alone, rather a research is undertaken for the purpose of discovering things that would make life comfortable and for one to attain the celestial bliss in the hereafter. In this way, an Islamic researcher sees himself as someone yielding to the instruction of Allah to undertake research in his area of study. He does that under strict Islamic compliance, and therefore, expects his reward from Allah, in addition to any mundane reward he might get from such research.

Another salient feature of Islamic research is that it ensures absolute unity between the Book of Allah's Creation and the Book of Allah's Revelation. The Book of Allah's final revelation is the Qur'an, while the book of creation is the natural universe. A thorough research into these two books makes a comprehensive knowledge which is a prerequisite for building a virile civilized society. A neglect of one at the expense of the other leads to one-sidedness and a refutation of the purpose of human creation.

Islamic research further ensures uniformity in its discoveries. In essence, there should be no contradiction in the Book of Revelation and Book of Creation as the two are authored by Allah. Where there is any, then the fault should be looked for in the reader who may be influenced by certain factors to give contradictory interpretation of what he read. To avert this, Islamic research enjoins that both books are read together, while appropriate methods are used.

Activity III

1. Explain the three salient features of the Islamic research method.
2. Although *Qalb*, *Aql* and *Al-hiss* serve as essential organs and tools by which the scientific knowledge can be acquired, they have their limitations and deficiencies. Discuss.
3. Should there be any contradiction between the Book of Revelation and Book of Creation?

Summary

In this unit you have learnt the three salient features of the Islamic research method. The involvement of the heart, the intellect and the senses enables a researcher to acquire scientific knowledge. Though Islamic method of research uses these tools, it recognizes revelation as the most reliable source of knowledge. Furthermore, the purpose of research is all-encompassing, because Islamic research is undertaken for the purpose of discovering things that would make life comfortable and for the researcher to attain the celestial bliss in the hereafter. Finally, Islamic research ensures absolute unity between the Book of Revelation and Book of Creation.

Unit 4: Typical Research Areas in Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking has become a research intensive exercise among Muslim scholars and researchers. No doubt, thousands of works and researches have been written and carried out in many aspects of Islamization of Knowledge. That notwithstanding, there is no limit to any prospective researcher who may want to carry out research in any aspect of the programme. This unit will therefore be useful for such researcher to avoid wobbling in the course of his task.

It should be noted that a record of work carried out on various disciplines from Islamic perspectives have been properly documented. In their contributions, B. S. Aliyu and D. Mustapha (2000) have compiled a long list of bibliography covering journal articles, books and other reference materials that are available on Islamization of Knowledge. In the same vein, Adebayo (2003) in his thesis documented as an appendix the available materials on Islamization of Knowledge in Nigeria. The works are arranged serially based on subject area. Area covered include: Anthropology, Banking, Economics, Education, Law, Ethics, Social Sciences, Medicine, Sociology, Science, Technology, Mass Communication and other areas.

Apart from the above, Umar (2000) has provided a long list of potential research topics relevant to Islamization of Knowledge undertaking. The list is divided into nine broad research areas, namely: Knowledge in Islam, Sciences, Education, Ecology, Environment and Land Management, Economy and Society, Sociology, Political Science, Management Sciences, Law, Language and Communication.

Activity IV

1. Can you carry out an Islamic research?
2. Mention five broad research areas in Islamic Research.

Summary

In this unit you have learnt broad research areas that are available for any researcher who wants to carry out Islamic research. These areas include Management, Ecology, Economy, Education and Sociology.