

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT NIGERIA OFFICE



MANUAL ON
ISLAMIZATION
OF KNOWLEDGE



Edited by
Sulaiman A. Karwai
2010

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Module Ten

MODULE SEVEN

ISLAMIZATION OF EDUCATION

Unit 1: The Nature of Education

Unit 2: The Methodology of Education

Unit 3: Islamizing Education

MODULE SEVEN

ISLAMIZATION OF EDUCATION

Introduction

The universality and neutrality of knowledge is generally upheld by scholars, as all useful knowledge emanates from Allah: the source of knowledge. It is on the basis of this that knowledge was initially closely connected to the church. Early universities in England, France, Italy, Spain and other European countries followed this trend prior to the great expansion of the mercantile system of Western Europe and the onset of the industrial revolution which paved way for secularism. This, therefore, confirms the assertion that the means through which knowledge is perceived and transmitted is not devoid of cultural prejudices. In other words, the means of acquiring knowledge (education), as well as the instrument of perception (reasoning) are greatly influenced by cultural and environmental factors, hence the need for them to be permeated with Islamic teachings so that knowledge is traced back to its originator—Allah. In short, education is a means of transmitting culture from one generation to the other, and thus has cultural and environmental influences. Therefore, education needs to be Islamized, or else the Muslim community would be at the risk of undermining itself.

Objectives

The trainees, after reading this module, should be able to:

- Expose the problem facing Islamic education in the contemporary world;
- Have a critique of the prevailing Western system of education;
- Explain the means through which education could be Islamized.

Scope

The scope of this module covers a critique of traditional Islamic system of education and Western system of education with a view to justifying their Islamization potentials.

Also, various strategies have been laid down by prominent scholars on Islamization of Knowledge programme. This module will therefore, discuss some of these strategies as emphasized by the scholars.

Unit 1: The Nature of Education

The traditional Islamic system of education bequeathed to us could not be considered a replica of true Islamic education as it lacks some essential ingredients. This could be asserted in view of the tatty and malnourished products of the system found in street junctions and round-about, as well as the nature of the curriculum, management and organization of the system which make it difficult to breed functional products that would have meaningful contribution to the socio-political and economic development of the modern world.

Apart from the above, the initial declaration of the closure of the door of Ijtihad by orthodox Muslim scholars marks a serious setback on the Muslim education system. Among other things, the declaration led to intellectual stagnation which consequently paved the way for blind imitation (*Taqlid*).

The adoption of the Western system of education by the Muslim world could not save the situation, as the system is grossly in conflict with the Islamic paradigm. These conflicts are succinctly highlighted by Hussein and Ashraf (1979) thus:

Modern Western education places an exaggerated emphasis upon reason and rationality and underestimates the value of the spirit. It encourages scientific inquiry at the expense of faith; it promotes individualism; it breeds skepticism; it refuses to accept that which is not demonstrable; it is *anthropocentric* rather than *Theocentric*. Even where it does not directly challenge faith, it relegates it to the background as something much less important than reason.

Activity 1

- 1- What is the nature of traditional Islamic system of education bequeathed to us?
- 2- What are the consequences of declaration of the closure of the door of Ijtihad by some Muslim scholars?
- 3- Discuss the impact of the adoption of the Western system of education, which is grossly in conflict with Islamic paradigm, on the Muslim Ummah.

Summary

The traditional Islamic system of education does not often produce people who make meaningful contribution to the socio-political and economic development of the modern world. But the adoption of the Western system of education by the Muslim world does not solve the problem, it rather creates more problems.

Unit 2: The Methodology of Education

The conventional methodological framework of education is premised upon secularism, which gives no room for revelation as a source of knowledge. It thus, considers empiricism as true source of knowledge and anything outside this as a non-scientific, mythic or superstitious. The methodology of this system of education therefore lacks a balanced interaction between the belief system, the knowledge system and the value system, the integration of which makes true knowledge.

There is no doubt that a knowledge based on empiricism is built on observation and experimentation, hence the existence of many theories, as many as there are observations. In addition to this, the results of scientific research are hampered by techniques and instruments used. In other words, the instruments used determine the validity of the findings. The non-recognition of revelation as a source of knowledge, as well as absolute reliance on rational thinking, experimentation and observation has blind-folded scholars and philosophers to realize the fallibility of empiricism as a source of knowledge. A summary of these shortcomings is given by Sulaiman (1998) as follows:

- 1-Derived conclusions cannot be locally valid for generalization because there could be exceptions.
- 2- Methodology of data collection is theory-laden, that is the investigator has pre-conceptions and motives which influence his choice of methodology in his investigations, and this subsequently affects the outcome.
- 3- In trying to gain data about the world, filtration mechanism operates between our sensation of the world and our perception of knowledge about it. Such mechanisms include:
 - i- Psychological delusions: Insanity, for instance, affects our perception and there is a difficulty in knowing who is a sane person. Galileo, for example, was regarded as being insane when he publicized his scientific findings;
 - ii- Our conceptual schemes may lead us to describe the world as what it is not, if they are inadequate.
 - iii- Social pressure may lead us to accept things simply because they are stated by famous authorities or the majority of people;

- iv- Prejudice can lead us to perceive more than what we see or to be selective in noticing things.

Activity II

- 1- How can we establish a balanced interaction between the belief system, the knowledge system and the value system?
- 2- Mention three shortcomings of absolute reliance on rational thinking, experimentation and observation.

Summary

The conventional methodological framework of education lacks a balanced interaction between the belief, the knowledge and the value systems. The shortcomings of this framework lead to methodological, generalization and other fallacies.

Unit 3: Islamizing Education

Attempts to reorient and recast knowledge to conform to the Islamic belief system and worldview have been considered a serious task in bailing out knowledge from its present shackle of Western epistemology. As such, scholars have been proposing steps towards integrating Western with the Islamic system of education for the purpose of checking the bifurcation bequeathed to us by the colonial masters and the missionaries. One of the earliest proponents of the Islamization of Knowledge programme as a means of solving educational crisis facing the Ummah was late Professor Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi. Among his numerous contributions to the programme is his 12-step work plan formulated as a working principle to guide the programme of Islamization. These are:

- | | | |
|---------|---|--|
| Step 1 | - | Mastery of the modern disciplines |
| Step 2 | - | Detailed survey of disciplines |
| Step 3 | - | Mastery of the Islamic legacy: the anthology |
| Step 4 | - | Mastery of the Islamic legacy: The analysis |
| Step 5 | - | Establishment of the specific relevance of Islam to the disciplines. |
| Step 6 | - | Critical assessment of the modern disciplines |
| Step 7 | - | Critical assessment of the Islamic legacy |
| Step 8 | - | Survey of the Ummah's major problems |
| Step 9 | - | Survey of the problems of human kind |
| Step 10 | - | Creative analysis and synthesis |
| Step 11 | - | Recasting the disciplines under the framework of Islam: |
| | | The University Textbooks |
| Step 12 | - | Dissemination of the Islamized knowledge |

The objectives of the work plan, according to Al-Faruqi, are as follows:

- 1) To master the modern disciplines;
- 2) To master the Islamic legacy;
- 3) To establish the specific relevance of Islam to each area of modern knowledge;

- 4) To seek ways for creative synthesis between the legacy and modern knowledge; and
- 5) To launch Islamic thought on the trajectory, which would lead it to the fulfillment of the divine patterns of Allah.

Apart from Al-Faruqi's work plan, Al-Alwani (1995) has equally offered six discourses. They are:

- 1- Articulating the Islamic paradigm of knowledge
- 2- Developing a Qur'anic methodology
- 3- Developing a methodology for dealing with the Qur'an
- 4- Developing a methodology for dealing with the Sunnah
- 5- Re-examining the Islamic cultural heritage
- 6- Dealing with the Western intellectual heritage

It needs to be mentioned that the work plan of Al-Faruqi has remained a basis for other scholars to formulate their own discourses. Attempts by such scholars to shorten or present an alternative option for the work plan have resulted in merging some of the steps together with little or no innovation whatsoever. For instance, in his own attempt, Safi (1993) succeeded in reducing the whole steps into mastery of substantive knowledge, mastery of methodological knowledge and finally production of university textbooks and other intellectual works for the Muslim community to examine, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. In the same vein, Maiwada (1999) considered the twelve work plan of Al-Faruqi as lengthy. He thus reduced it to seven by eliminating steps 2, 7, 8 and 9 and merging steps 3 and 4 to become one.

In his own contribution, Shehu (1998) examines the major tasks of the project of Islamization which must be pursued as a radical intellectual revolutionary exercise. The tasks are:

- 1- Formulating an Islamic theory of knowledge based on the Qur'an and Sunnah
- 2- Formulating and establishing Islamically based content and infrastructure of knowledge
- 3- Production of Islamized teaching personnel.
- 4- Laying down plans and strategies for successful implementation.
- 5- Setting a time frame for the programme

Activity III

- 1) How can we bail out knowledge from its present shackle of Western epistemology?
- 2) Identify some steps in Islamization of education.

Summary

This unit examined the alternative educational theory which will epistemologically reflect Allah as the source of knowledge, and will emphasize transcendental value above the terrestrial materialistic values. This alternative educational theory is the Islamization of education. The unit also delved into steps of Islamizing education as propounded by some scholars in the field of Islamization of knowledge undertaking.