

An Analysis on Mohd. Kamal Hassan's Views of Islamisation of Human Knowledge (IOHK) and Relevantisation of Islamic Sciences

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Abstract

Despite the significant influence of Mohd. Kamal Hassan's (hereinafter cited as Kamal) framework on Islamic education and knowledge integration, there remains a gap in systematic analysis of his "Islamicisation of human knowledge" (IOHK) methodology and its practical implementation. Additionally, while IOHK has been implemented at various institutions, there is limited documentation of its effectiveness and challenges in contemporary educational settings. This article explores the late Kamal's ideas on IOHK as well as the relevantisation of Islamic sciences, and summarises Kamal's six rationales for IOHK, which are based on Qur'ānic teachings, the Tawhīdic worldview, and historical instances of Islamic intellectualism. By examining these rationales and their implementation, the article addresses the critical need for understanding how IOHK can effectively bridge the gap between Islamic and contemporary knowledge systems, apart from looking at how IOHK handles both current Muslim societies' intellectual problems and the worldwide challenges offered by secular Western thought. It focuses on the practical application of IOHK at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and also covers policy declarations and activities inside IIUM, such as the institution's adoption of 21 various modes of IOHK. In conclusion, suggestions are made to reinforce and increase the relevance of IOHK in current circumstances, emphasising its ability to contribute to the development of the Muslim *ummah*.

Keywords:

Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Islamisation of Human Knowledge (IOHK), relevantisation, Islamic sciences, Western thought.

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Introduction

The late Mohd. Kamal Hassan (1942–2023),¹ a distinguished scholar from Malaysia, articulated the profound philosophy of the “Islamisation of human knowledge” (IOHK) and the relevantisation of Islamic sciences, which are explored in this article. His philosophy emphasises the integration of Islamic principles with modern knowledge to address the intellectual and educational crises facing Muslim societies. This article methodically analyses his ideas, starting with an investigation of his seminal writings and the underlying sources that support the IOHK framework. Beyond praise, the effort includes constructive criticism with the goal of improving and clarifying Kamal’s perspectives on IOHK. The IOHK framework holds significant importance in Muslim communities and possesses the potential to contribute to the formation of a progressive and exemplary community (*khayra ummah and ummatan wasāta*).

The article intends to shed light on IOHK’s practical and intellectual uses in current Muslim situations, notably in confronting the challenges given by secular Western thought. The article examines the six rationales for IOHK expressed by Kamal, showing its theological, epistemological, and historical roots and relevance to current education. Furthermore, the article investigates the implementation of IOHK in institutions such as the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and makes recommendations for its improvement. Recognising its limitations, this article seeks to add valuable insights to the current discussion of IOHK and its critical role in moulding the intellectual environment in the Muslim world. The methodology of this article involves a thematic and textual analysis of Kamal’s writings and lectures on IOHK. The primary sources include Kamal’s writings and his public lectures at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). For secondary sources, this article extensively draws from scholarly interpretations and critiques of Kamal’s IOHK framework.

Six Rationales of IOHK

In a lecture delivered by Kamal in 2022, he outlined six rationales of IOHK.² Firstly, relying upon principal lessons from the Qur’ān that urge people to seek true knowledge in alignment with the divine purpose. The command to “Read in the name of your Lord Who created”³ highlights the necessity for acquiring knowledge in alignment with the Creator’s will. Additionally, verses in *Sūrat al-‘Alaq* caution against human transgressions driven by a false sense

1. Henceforth cited as Kamal.

2. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, “Islamisation of Human Knowledge” (lecture, IIUM Gombak, January 2022).

3. *Sūrat al-‘Alaq* (96):1.

of self-sufficiency and autonomy, emphasising the accountability to God for deviations from divine norms. The Qur'ān distinguishes true knowledge as originating from God's revelation from false claims based on conjecture and warns mankind against it. The use of reason and intellect, while essential for human development, must align with divine revelation to avoid transgressing divine limits. This perspective addresses the modern existential crisis resulting from the rejection of religious wisdom, urging adherence to divine guidance for a balanced and purposeful human existence.

Secondly, IOHK is rooted in the Tawhīdic worldview of the Qur'ān, emphasising the transformative mission of God's Messengers, the elevated status of true scholars and those endowed with knowledge, and the intrinsic connection between *ʿilm* (knowledge) and Truth in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān highlights the challenges faced by the Messengers as they introduced the ontology, cosmology, and epistemology of *tawhīd* (the unity of God) to communities entrenched in *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance), *shirk* (ascribing partners to God), or *kufṛ* (unbelief) ideologies. While the Messengers did not explicitly use the terminology of IOHK, their missions involved confronting prevailing positivist, ignorant, humanist, and often misleading epistemologies, and enduring hardships for the sake of disseminating true knowledge and wisdom. The term "*islāmiyyat al-ma'arīf*" is described as a "new slogan for an ancient substance," signifying a contemporary expression for an enduring essence.

The third rationale for IOHK, according to Kamal, is grounded in the divine purpose of creating humans as servants of Allah and appointing them as stewards of the Earth, emphasising the responsibility of *ʿimārat al-ard* (prospering the earth). Believers are urged to use their intellect as a divine trust—guarding against the influence of base desires and Satanic insinuations—to achieve goodness in this world and the Hereafter while avoiding divine chastisement. The Qur'ān acknowledges that believers will face opposition and challenges from forces of evil, particularly from cultures of *kufṛ* that defy the sovereignty of the Creator. Muslims, mandated with responsibilities like vicegerency, good governance, societal purification, and striving in the path of Allah, must resist intellectual invasions by upholding Islamic paradigms of knowledge against false and harmful knowledge propagated by their adversaries. Effective realisation of duties of vicegerents relies on establishing pillars of true knowledge and wisdom, emphasising the need for God-fearing leadership in Muslim societies.

Fourth justification is emphasised by pointing to the appalling condition of the Muslim *ummah* on a worldwide scale as well as the main issues that modern civilisation is currently confronting. The dismal state of the Muslim *ummah* globally necessitates comprehensive reform rooted in educational transformation based on the Islamic worldview. Scholars advocate integrating Divinely revealed knowledge with human reason, harmonising spirituality and science, and unifying roles of servanthood and vicegerency. Rejecting the Western

models of religious-secular dualism, an integrated Islamic education model is proposed to address the crisis in Muslim educational institutions. Pursuing knowledge and technology compatible with Islam from outside Muslim culture is seen as essential. Concerned scholars argue that the continued dominance of Western secular thought may intensify global crises, highlighting moral, political, economic, and environmental challenges as evidence for the need to change.

The fifth inspiration for IOHK draws from the remarkable intellectual achievements of early Islamic civilisation, where scholars exemplified the unity of spirit and science. Guided by Qur'ānic principles, early Muslim intellectuals sought knowledge beyond their culture, exploring Greek and Indian sciences. Through meticulous study, they adapted and synthesised aspects of foreign knowledge compatible with Islam, representing ancient modes of “Islamicisation.” Figures like al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) played a pioneering role in this process. The Islamic civilisation of Andalusia became a key centre for the Islamicisation of human knowledge, fostering advancements in natural sciences, medicine, and astronomy. The pre-modern products of Islamicised knowledge, developed in centres like Andalusia, Baghdad, and Damascus, emphasise the potential for a harmonious submission of reason to the revelation in scientific and technological pursuits.

The sixth IOHK's historical justification also comes from Muslim intellectuals' reformist battles against Western colonisation and their remarkable educational reforms. The advent of Western influence led to the systematic secularisation and Westernisation of Muslim culture and education. In response, early 20th-century Islamic reformist movements, such as *al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* and *al-Manar*, sought to integrate science with divine spirit especially in education. These movements, championed by figures like Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), and Rashid Ridha (d. 1935), played a crucial role in reforming Muslim education and countering colonial influence. In the Dutch East Indies, the emergence of Muhammadiyah under K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1923) in 1912 strengthened Islamic reformist thought. However, the emergence of revivalism movements like Ikhwan Muslimin in Egypt and Jamaat-e-Islami in the Indian subcontinent, led by Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) and Sayyid Abū al-A'la al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979), respectively, had a lasting impact on post-colonial Islamic thought.

In conclusion, Kamal's explanation of the rationale behind IOHK offers a thorough basis for comprehending the philosophy's tenets. First of all, a moral and purpose-driven framework for acquiring information is established by the emphasis on pursuing real knowledge that is in line with divine purpose, which is drawn from Qur'ānic teachings. The Qur'ānic Tawhīdic worldview presents IOHK as an uprising that mirrors the difficulties God's Messengers encountered in opposing dominant ideologies. The obligation of *ʿimārat al-ard* and the divine plan for designating humanity as stewards of the planet emphasise the moral aspects of knowledge application.

Furthermore, IOHK promotes an integrated education paradigm in response to the current issues that the Muslim *ummah* is confronting as well as the larger problems of contemporary society. The justification for balancing revelation and reason is emphasised, taking inspiration from the intellectual accomplishments of early Islamic civilisation, especially in Andalusia. The reformist struggles against Western colonisation, which highlight the continuous fight to maintain Islamic identity and knowledge in the face of outside influences, provide the final historical reason. Together, these justifications present IOHK as a comprehensive response to ethical, philosophical, and civilisational issues, highlighting the combination of divine wisdom and human reason for the benefit of Muslim civilisations and all of humanity.

IOK⁴ Policy Declarations and Initiatives with 21 Different IOK modes in IIUM⁵

Kamal examines the official IOK (as used in the IIUM Policy instead of IOHK as he would have it) policy declarations and the kinds of IOK initiatives that have been formalised within the particular framework of IIUM. He reviews and compares various definitions of IOK that have been put forward by prominent scholars in the field. He highlights the common objectives as well as slight differences between the perspectives of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1931–present), Ismail Faruqi (d. 1986), and others. This contains the wide definition of IOK that IIUM adopted as well as a system of classification that consists of 21 different IOK modes that range in the necessity from low to high. Each level builds upon the preceding one, with the ultimate aim of achieving a complete transformation of knowledge in alignment with Islamic principles.

Low Necessity Modes

At the foundational level, the Low Necessity Modes introduce basic efforts to bridge Islamic and conventional knowledge. These involve simple comparison, integration, and harmonisation of Islamic perspectives with secular frameworks. Academics at this stage aim to identify parallels and shared values without engaging deeply in critical evaluation. These approaches serve as stepping stones for new scholars, helping them comfortably navigate both domains as they transition from traditional educational backgrounds.

4. As used in the IIUM Policy instead of IOHK.

5. Mohd. Kamal, “Islamisation of Human Knowledge,” (lecture).

Medium Necessity Modes

In the Medium Necessity Category, the focus shifts to adaptation, synthesis, and naturalisation of existing knowledge frameworks. These modes require scholars to begin blending Islamic elements into their fields more comprehensively. For example, they might adapt existing theories to align with Islamic ethical principles or synthesise insights from Islamic and secular traditions to develop hybrid models. This stage marks a deeper engagement with Islamisation, balancing respect for existing knowledge with the intention to reshape it subtly.

High Necessity Modes

The High Necessity Modes demand significant academic effort and expertise. These involve indigenisation, critical appreciation, and critical refutation, where scholars critically examine secular theories and frameworks to assess their compatibility with Islamic values. Indigenisation emphasises localising knowledge to resonate with Islamic cultures and contexts, while critical appreciation seeks to value beneficial aspects of secular knowledge. Simultaneously, critical refutation identifies and challenges elements that conflict with Islamic teachings, pushing the boundaries of intellectual rigor in pursuit of truth.

Highest Necessity Modes

The pinnacle of IOHK efforts includes the reorientation, deconstruction, reconstruction, and even the construction of entirely new paradigms. Scholars at this level aim to develop innovative frameworks, disciplines, and theories rooted entirely in the Islamic worldview. This stage represents the ultimate realisation of IOHK, where knowledge is not merely adapted but fundamentally reimagined to reflect Islamic epistemology. Such efforts contribute to the establishment of Islamic schools of thought and the creation of ground-breaking academic contributions.⁶

In summary, the 21 modes of IOHK represent a progressive journey for scholars, starting from basic integration efforts and culminating in transformative academic achievements. This structured approach emphasises the necessity of gradual development, ensuring that scholars evolve intellectually and spiritually while contributing to the Islamisation mission in a sustainable and impactful manner.

6. Ibid.

IIUM's Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS) has formulated the following very wide interpretation of IOK that is pertinent to the setting in IIUM prior to the creation of the IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation:

1. IOHK is an alternative paradigm for the pursuing, constructing, developing, adapting, sifting, critiquing, organising, disseminating, reconstructing, utilising, and evaluating contemporary human knowledge—as distinct Divinely revealed knowledge—in accordance with the worldview, fundamental principles, ethical values and norms of Islam.
2. This alternative paradigm, based on the theology, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and ethics of *Tawhīd*, critically assesses the different branches of contemporary human knowledge, particularly as represented and constructed by the secular Western behavioural sciences, social sciences and humanities, including the philosophical foundations and ethical orientations of the natural, physical and applied sciences—insofar as they are imbued with worldviews, underlying assumptions, or theories which are contrary to or not in conformity with the Islamic worldview.⁷
3. By the same token, this alternative paradigm considers any kind of knowledge, theories, practices, skills, or systems coming from the West or the East, which are in harmony or congruent with the Islamic creed of *tawhīd*, the ultimate objectives of the *sharī'ah*, and moral (*akhlāq*) principles, values, and norms of Islam, to be acceptable and adaptable.
4. The process of intellectual reform and transformation that this alternative paradigm implies, presupposes the process of “Islamicisation of the Self,” which refers to the sound development of the personality and character of the Muslim academics, scholars, professionals, or administrators—particularly in an Islamic university. This process involves the inculcation of Islam's spiritual and moral values, proper intellectual outlook and work ethics as contained in the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the works of great Muslim scholars of the past.

A shorter definition of IOHK which is also used in IIUM is the process by which aspects of acquired human knowledge, products of human reasoning, experimentation, or sense perception, are produced, constructed, developed, utilised, and interpreted to align with the beliefs, tenets, *sharī'ah*, ethics, and the worldview of Islam.

7. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, “Islamization of Human Knowledge,” in *Islamic Economics Education in Southeast Asian Universities* (Kuala Lumpur: Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences IIUM and IIIT, 2013), 13–50.

Clarification of Terminologies: Islamisation, Islamicisation, and Relevantisation

Kamal prefers “Islamicisation” over “Islamisation” due to the latter implying the conversion of knowledge to Islam and being considered contradictory because Qur’ānic *‘ilm*, representing the highest truth, cannot be further Islamised, while the former conveys a process of conforming to Islamic principles and correcting knowledge derived from human rationality and reasoning. The term “Islamicisation” encompasses ideas, practices, and institutions that align with Islamic values, even if they originate from non-Muslim sources. “Islamicisation” widens the scope of Islamicity, incorporating all knowledge, science, and technology in harmony with Islamic values.⁸

A key analytical contribution he makes is the clarification regarding the disciplines of Islamic revealed knowledge which, he argues, require not Islamisation per se but rather a process of continuous relevantisation. Hence, he distinguishes between the two and specifies that IOHK is primarily focused on the acquired human knowledge and sciences which have developed on secular foundations.⁹ The relevantisation of Islamic Revealed Knowledge (IRK) represents a comprehensive approach that differs from simple Islamisation, as Islamic revealed knowledge disciplines are inherently Islamic in their foundation. This process encompasses several key Islamic concepts including *taghyīr* (societal change), *islāh* (reform), *tajdīd* (renewal), *ihyā’* (revival), *takāmul* (knowledge integration), and *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning). These elements work together to ensure that Islamic knowledge remains dynamic and applicable while respecting the distinction between changeable aspects (*mutaghayyirāt*) and immutable principles (*thawābit*) of Islamic teachings.¹⁰

The implementation of relevantisation focuses on integrating beneficial ideas from various sciences and disciplines, provided that they align with Islamic principles of *‘aqidah*, *sharī‘ah*, and *akhlāq*. This approach emphasises continuous improvement in teaching methods, research quality, and cross-disciplinary collaboration to address contemporary societal challenges. It is considered a “highest necessity category” for Islamic revealed knowledge disciplines, requiring active engagement in high-quality research, innovation, and authentic application of Qur’ānic and Sunnah teachings to modern contexts, moving beyond traditional conservative approaches to ensure Islam’s dynamic role in contemporary civilisation.¹¹

8. Sayyed Mohamed Muhsin, “Broadening the Dimensions of Islamization of Knowledge: Mohd Kamal Hassan’s Perspective,” *International Journal of Islamic Thoughts* 4, no. 1 (2015): 31–42.

9. Mohd. Kamal, “Islamization of Human Knowledge,” 13–50.

10. CENTRIS, *IUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation* (Gombak: Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS) IUM, 2013), 41–45.

11. Ibid.

Role and Scope of Laymen in IOHK

Kamal emphasises the inclusive role of laymen in the IOHK and calls for everyone to actively participate, regardless of background or level of knowledge. He provides a sophisticated framework with four types of “necessity,” which indicate the many degrees of participation and dedication that people can have in this life-changing experience. Crucially, this framework acknowledges the dynamic character of individual engagement with IOHK by permitting inter-level mobility. In particular, laymen are encouraged to supplement their knowledge of Islam with easily accessible sources, which will promote lifelong learning and make a significant contribution to the larger process of incorporating Islamic concepts into other domains of human knowledge. This method not only makes interaction with IOHK more democratic but also emphasises how important it is for people from all walks of life to work together to create an intellectual environment that is both peaceful and well-informed.¹²

Islamicisation of the Self

In the discourse on the Islamisation of the self and knowledge, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas highlights the pivotal role of *adab*, characterising it as the discipline of body, mind, and soul. Al-Attas posits that true knowledge can only be acquired by individuals who have developed the wisdom of *adab*, instilling a sense of responsibility and self-discipline. The Islamisation of self, as articulated by al-Attas, is aimed at liberating individuals from negative influences that contradict the Islamic worldview. He contends that the human interpretation of knowledge can lead to corruption and misunderstanding, emphasising the necessity of cultivating *adab* to comprehend the true meaning of knowledge. This perspective emphasises the interconnectedness of spiritual, intellectual, and physical aspects in shaping an individual's understanding and application of knowledge. On the other hand, Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) approaches the Islamisation of knowledge from a different angle, asserting that knowledge itself is neutral and not inherently value-loaded. He places the responsibility on Muslims to Islamise their minds and thoughts, advocating for a change in the approach and reception of knowledge among Muslim learners. Rahman argues that the misuse of knowledge in the modern world is the result of a failure in human responsibility, and he emphasises the need to Islamise individuals' minds to ensure responsible utilisation of knowledge.

Kamal contributes to the discussion by highlighting the essential role of Islamisation of self as a prerequisite for the efficient initiation and accomplishment of the IOHK process. He emphasises the significance of *ulū*

12. Muhsin, “Broadening the Dimensions of Islamization of Knowledge.”

al-albāb, intellectuals who successfully combine scientific understanding with religious wisdom and moral consciousness. The fundamental premise is that both the natural world and divine scripture represent different forms of God’s revelation—“the book of nature” (*kitāb takwīmī*) and “the book of revelation” (*kitāb tadwīmī*). True Islamic scholarship requires studying and synthesising both sources of knowledge. This means, Muslim scientists and scholars should approach their scientific work with religious consciousness (*taqwā*), while religious scholars should be well-versed in modern scientific knowledge.¹³ This is the way of the Prophet Muḥammad which embodies high moral standards, wisdom, sincere faith, and continual fear of God. The Qur’ān emphasises that people who genuinely comprehend God’s creation would fear Him and calls for the application of reason and reflection on the natural world.¹⁴ By highlighting the qualities essential for *ulū al-albāb*, he underscores the importance of a spiritually ethical foundation in contributing to the IOHK process. This perspective complements the ideas of both al-Attas and Rahman, as it integrates the spiritual dimension into the broader framework of Islamisation of knowledge. The integration of spiritual dimension as an essential component of IOHK aligns with a holistic understanding of knowledge and human well-being.¹⁵

Kamal emphasises the importance of improving the understanding of Islam as the worldview and source of culture and civilisation. He also emphasises character, attitude, and work ethics of scholars and individuals involved in IOHK. He highlights the inseparability of IOHK from the Islamicisation of the self, underlining the significance of spiritual and moral development.¹⁶ He stresses that the ailing world economy is rooted from ignorance of ethical and noble values in business, and these values have not been emphasised seriously, especially aspects of religiosity. Therefore, using a non-Islamic business success as a parameter will mislead Muslims in setting real and meaningful goals. As emphasised in Islam, the purpose of the existence of human beings in this world is to obey God, who declares it in the Qur’ān: “And I (Allah) created not the jinn and humans except that they should obey Me (Alone).”¹⁷ Therefore,

13. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, “A Return to the Qur’ānic Paradigm of Development and Integrated Knowledge: The *Ulū al-Albāb* Model,” *Intellectual Discourse* 18, no. 2 (2010): 183–210.

14. Idem, “The Necessity of Understanding the Cosmos, Nature and Man, as Well as the Unity of Knowledge, Faith and Ethics from the Worldview of the Qur’ān: Implications on an International Islamic University,” *Revelation and Science* 8, no. 2 (2018): 1–12.

15. Muhsin, “Broadening the Dimensions of Islamization of Knowledge.”

16. Ibid.

17. *Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt* (51):56.

achieving success (*al-falāh*) in the business context as well as others is crucial so that Muslim can carry out their responsibility as the *khalīfah* (vicegerent) of this world.¹⁸

Integration of Islamic Values

Kamal extended the application of IOHK to English Studies, suggesting that despite the historical use of English language and literature in colonial contexts, such use could be transformed through an IOHK perspective. English departments in Muslim countries could become spaces for harmonious dialogue between civilisations, providing a transcendent dimension lacking in contemporary Western civilisation. Additionally, he stresses on the importance of analysing English literary works through the lenses of *ʿaqīdah*, *sharīʿah*, and *akhlāq*. This integration of Islamic values into literary analysis adds a unique dimension to the approach. Kamal also encourages Muslim academics to prioritise Islamic values and seek God's pleasure in their work. This provides a moral compass for academics and emphasises the ethical dimensions of knowledge production and dissemination.¹⁹

In his insightful essays on the policy and direction of integration of Islamic values in IIUM teaching and learning, he provides a clear definition of ideas of change and reform (*islāh*), renewal (*tajdīd*), revivication (*ihyāʾ*), relevantisation, modernisation (*tahdīth*), and integration (*takāmul maʿrifī*), as well as other intellectual and academic endeavours and initiatives that were geared to realising the vision of Islamisation of human knowledge and integrative mission: “the integration or incorporation of divinely revealed values and norms/Islamic worldview/Islamic or Qurʾānic perspectives/positive aspects of Muslim religious and intellectual legacy with the contemporary social sciences, human sciences, humanities, natural sciences, applied and professional sciences.”²⁰ This policy has been laid out in a planned and strategic manner, by expanding and gearing up creative initiative through working a limited integration model in the Kulliyah of Science and Medicine, that: “A form of limited integration called ‘Islamic input’ has been going on for some time now in the Kulliyah of Medicine.”²¹

The main goal of IOHK is to integrate Islamic principles into all domains of knowledge and society. This includes ethics, values, teachings, worldview etc. The end objective is to establish a consensus (*ijmāʿ*) amongst scholars that

18. Zanatul Shima Aminuddin et al., “Exploring the Concept of al-Falāh (Success) in Business: An Insight from Muslim Experts,” *BEST: International Journal of Management, Information Technology and Engineering* 4, no. 8 (August 2016): 23–36.

19. Wan Nur Madiha Ramlan, “Webinar on Islam and English Studies,” *Asiatic* 15, no. 2 (2021): 128–32.

20. As cited in Ahmad Nabil Amir, “Islamization of Knowledge in Historical Perspective,” *Tarikhuna: Journal of History and History Education* 5, no. 1 (Mei 2023).

21. Ibid.

aligns knowledge systems with the Islamic paradigm. IOHK should not be seen as a fixed set of axioms or rules. Rather, it is a developing intellectual methodology and worldview that evolves over time. It focuses more on the approach rather than just the outcomes. A core emphasis is on the higher objectives of Islam—establishing justice, equality, and morality in human life based on divine foundations. Hence Islamic ethics informs the Islamisation methodology and its value system.²²

Practical Aspects of IOHK

Kamal emphasises the practical aspects of IOHK rather than formulating a neat theoretical framework. His focus is on producing Muslim professionals who integrate Islamic values in their work and behaviour, not just on Islamising knowledge itself. The core of IOHK should be helping Muslims acquire “useful knowledge” (*‘ilm nāfi*) leading to moral action and good behaviour (*husn al-khuluq*). This embodies the Prophet Muḥammad’s mission to perfect moral character. He has made IOHK more of an academic than political process at IIUM as he believes IOHK approaches are a matter of *ijtihād* which can be debated, not divine knowledge to be imposed. This gives IIUM scholars freedom to follow varied IOHK methodologies. Kamal argues that equal emphasis should be placed on students’ moral and character development in IOHK, not just development of an Islamic epistemology. Graduates should internalise Islamic beliefs, law, and ethics in their professional lives.²³

Kamal was instrumental in the conceptualisation and establishment of IIUM in 1983, with the goal of creating a unique model of an Islamic university focused on integrating Islamic principles across all disciplines. A core part of his vision was the Centre for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK), which aimed to provide students with a strong spiritual and moral foundation rooted in Islamic teachings. Courses at CFK covered topics like the Islamic worldview, morals, spirituality, and the purpose of life. He saw spirituality and morals as essential for holistic development and achieving excellence. He critiqued secular models of education for their lack of spiritual development. The curriculum across IIUM integrates an Islamic perspective in all disciplines. The goal is to nurture balanced personalities and produce excellent graduates grounded in Islam while also professionally equipping students to face modern challenges.

22. Muhammad Mostofa Hossain et al., “The Methodology of Islamization of Knowledge: A Conceptual Study,” *International Journal of Islamic Business & Management* 6, no. 1 (2022): 9–18.

23. Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah, Suhailah Hussien, and Nik A. Hisham, “The Experience of Islamization of Knowledge at the International Islamic University Malaysia: Successes and Challenges,” in *New Intellectual Horizons in Education* (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2011), 91–110.

There was a focus on practical translation of IOHK into IIUM's curriculum, student development programmes and university culture. The CFK played a key role in imparting spiritual and moral foundation to students across disciplines.²⁴

Analysis

Positive, Balanced, Extensive, and Inclusive Approaches of Critiques of Western Knowledge

Kamal does not make harsh judgments or sweeping criticisms. His approach is more positive and exploratory rather than criticising other scholars outrightly. He exhibits an excellent refinement and balance in his approach to the IOHK. Instead of fervently supporting the viewpoints of a single academic, he welcomes a range of ideas from eminent figures in thought, like al-Attas, Faruqi, and Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman (d. 2021). Because of his inclusive attitude, he is able to analyse the idea thoroughly and take into account a wide range of perspectives. Kamal creates an inclusive atmosphere for the analysis and development of IOHK by valuing the diversity of viewpoints. The only indirect criticism he offers is regarding some conservative religious groups who may refuse necessary reforms and changes to IRK disciplines to keep them relevant. He implies that this resistance to positive change and sticking to status quo would be a disservice to Islam.

The comprehensive historical framework provided by him undoubtedly enhances the depth of understanding. Through creating a link between past and present, he aims to increase the discourse's accessibility and relevance for Muslims living in various historical periods. This method helps to ground the IOHK within a larger historical framework while also demonstrating the continuity of Islamic philosophy. Furthermore, it is praiseworthy that he made the effort to define official policies and categories of activities in order to contextualise the IOHK specifically for the IIUM. This adds a useful perspective to the discussion and provides a set of criteria that may influence how IOHK is implemented in a learning environment. Nonetheless, there is ongoing critical examination of how well these rules support the true integration of Islamic Values in the academic setting.

A sophisticated approach to cross-cultural engagement is introduced by his proposal of an inclusive paradigm within the IOHK, wherein selective integration of significant Western knowledge is allowed. The emphasis on the inclusivity of the Islamicisation process, involving individuals from various academic backgrounds and levels, is a strength²⁵ in understanding the IOHK philosophy better. Although this position can be seen as beneficial for promoting

24. Mohd Mumtaz Ali and Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, "Kamal Hassan and the Birth of IIUM: A Retrospective Survey of His Ideas," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 20, no. 3 (2023): 309–336.

25. Muhsin, "Broadening the Dimensions of Islamization of Knowledge."

discussion and interaction, it also makes people think critically about the possible outcomes. Some could contend that taking such a stand raises questions about how achieving a harmonious intellectual synthesis could weaken Islamic values and jeopardise the integrity of traditional Islamic learning. The evaluation of Kamal's proposed paradigm inside the IOHK framework highlights the critical balance between inclusion and maintaining the fundamental principles of Islamic paradigm.

Furthermore, by attempting to connect IOHK contributions to the contemporary global challenges and portraying them as a way to forge connections between the Muslim and Western worlds, the discourse gains a useful component for problem-solving. This could encourage discussion, but it also raises questions about how well IOHK can truly bridge the gap between Western thought and Islamic scholarship without compromising the unique tenets of Islam. In essence, Kamal deserves recognition for promoting an inclusive worldview, and relating it to global issues thus making it more multidimensional. On the other hand, a critical examination raises concerns regarding these methods' possible effects on the authority of Islamic knowledge and how well IOHK may actually bridge intellectual differences.

The Clear Difference between IOHK and Relevantisation of IRK

Kamal's ability to distinguish between the IOHK and the "relevantisation" of IRK fields is one of his most important accomplishments. This analytical perspective provides important clarification on the particular areas that call for attempts to Islamise. This differentiation assumes special significance when addressing possible objections that can raise doubts about the suitability of incorporating the Qur'ān and *hadīth* into the Islamisation process. His methodical methodology guarantees a more deliberate and focused implementation of Islamisation initiatives, improving the accuracy and efficacy of the project as a whole.

Useful IOHK Policy Guidelines and Techniques

The IIUM has adopted Kamal's useful IOHK policy guidelines and categorical techniques, which offer a strong analytical framework. This approach addresses the complicated issues that are essential to an Islamic institution and helps move the discourse from a theoretical realm to a pragmatic implementation stage. Adopting these standards shows a careful and methodical approach, indicating a deep awareness of the complex difficulties associated with incorporating Islamic values into academic fields. This practical aspect makes sure that the IOHK is a real, well-executed project that suits the particular circumstances of an Islamic educational institution rather than just a theoretical idea.

Interdisciplinary Approach of IOHK

A dedication to a comprehensive understanding of knowledge is demonstrated by Kamal's support for an interdisciplinary approach, particularly the incorporation of Islamic epistemology into English Studies, Economics Studies and parts of Sciences Studies in IIUM. This approach recognises the interdependence of many disciplines of study and the enrichment of knowledge that results from the blending of diverse perspectives and epistemologies. Not only did he broaden the intellectual landscape, but he also fostered a more thorough comprehension of language and literature within the larger framework of Islamic epistemology by advocating for the integration of Islamic philosophy into the above studies. This multidisciplinary approach adds to a more complex and comprehensive educational experience in addition to enhancing scholarly discourse.

Moreover, the historical view offered by Kamal, emphasising the convergence of European and Muslim cultures, offers a new and optimistic perspective on the possibility of intercultural communication. He highlights the historical instances where Muslim and European civilisations have participated in productive interaction, mutual learning, and collaboration by contesting the dominant narrative of hostility. This historical perspective encourages a more positive understanding of cross-cultural interactions and challenges and inflexible dichotomies. The focus he places on historical synthesis acts as a potent counter-narrative, promoting a more honest and fruitful discussion between various intellectual and cultural traditions. All things considered, his methodology advances a conception of knowledge that is boundary-less and welcomes the possibility of mutual comprehension and cooperation in a variety of historical and cultural situations.²⁶

Balancing Spiritual Vision with Practical Realities in Education

The distinctive focus Kamal placed on moral and spiritual growth as essential elements of education sets his educational philosophy apart and allows it to flow naturally from Islamic teachings. This vision is brought to life through CFK, which offers an opportunity for the realisation of the incorporation of spirituality into education. In addition to fostering intellectual development, the holistic approach takes into account the vital components of moral behaviour and character development.²⁷ His criticism of secular educational paradigms that prioritise professional skills above spirituality and morality is relevant given the potential dehumanising consequences of placing an excessive emphasis on

26. Wan Nur Madiha, "Webinar on Islam and English Studies."

27. Ali and Mohd Abbas, "Kamal Hassan and the Birth of IIUM."

worldly objectives. His dedication to a more holistic and balanced approach acknowledges that education should support students' moral and spiritual development in addition to providing them with professional skills.²⁸

Integrating Islamic principles into academic fields is a strategic step that can support both career advancement and the building of robust Muslim identities. This all-encompassing method promotes balanced development, guaranteeing that students flourish in their chosen disciplines and mature into morally responsible adults who make valuable contributions to society. However, a potential weakness lies in the risk of overemphasising spirituality at the expense of professional skills development. Achieving the right balance is essential since an imbalance might leave graduates unprepared for the real-world demands of their chosen careers. Although spiritual and moral growth are noble objectives, there are difficulties in conceiving and implementing these concepts in the curriculum and the whole educational process. More careful thought and strategic planning are needed to close the gap between the ideal and its actual realisation.²⁹

Mandating courses similar to those offered at CFK for all students may encounter resistance or superficial interest, potentially undermining the intended spiritual impact. A comprehensive strategy that takes into account individual differences in students' willingness and openness to embracing spiritual and moral components in their education is necessary to achieve the desired results. In conclusion, while Kamal's emphasis on spiritual development is praiseworthy, his vision for education requires a careful balance with the pragmatic realities of skill development. Maintaining this equilibrium and resolving conceptualisation and implementation issues are critical to the long-term viability of an integrated learning approach.

Critique

Achieving Balance in Student and Staff Development within the IOHK Model

The emphasis on cultivating students' moral and spiritual development through the IOHK is commendable. Yet a crucial point about the necessity of a well-rounded strategy that incorporates demanding professional and technical skills into the IOHK model also becomes apparent. To provide a comprehensive education, the model should simultaneously place a high priority on the development of students' professional and technical competencies and the ethical and spiritual growth of each individual student.³⁰ Furthermore, it should be noted that under the IOHK structure, there may be an investment imbalance

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Mohd. Kamal, "Islamisation of Human Knowledge" (lecture).

between staff and student growth. For implementation to be successful across the educational spectrum, strong initiatives geared towards elevating teachers and researchers must be combined with student-focused efforts. A peaceful and enriching learning environment is fostered by balancing the growth of both staff and students. This guarantees a thorough and long-lasting incorporation of IOHK principles across the academic community.³¹

International Problem-Solving and Collaborative Research

The proposed plan advocates positioning the IOHK as a dynamic hub for international collaboration, fostering engagement between the Muslim and Western worlds. The strategic focus involves initiating cooperative research endeavours specifically centred around key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thereby creating a shared platform for IIUM and Western universities. By harnessing the diverse knowledge and resources stemming from various cultural perspectives, this cooperative approach seeks to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries. The overarching goal is to facilitate meaningful international collaboration that not only enriches the academic landscape but also contributes significantly to addressing pressing global challenges. The emphasis on certain SDGs ensures a targeted and impactful approach, aligning the collective efforts of IIUM and Western institutions towards finding innovative solutions to urgent and complex global issues.

Suggestions

Reform Achievements and the Gradualist Landscape

The objective of this idea is to spotlight and celebrate successful reform initiatives undertaken across various scales within the framework of the IOHK. The strategic aim is to alleviate concerns among both Muslim and non-Muslim populations by highlighting tangible “quick wins” and presenting concrete evidence of the positive intentions underlying IOHK. A crucial element of this approach involves a critical examination of ideological oppositions, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced. Additionally, there is a call to suggest prototype projects that can serve as practical demonstrations of the IOHK philosophy. This comprehensive strategy is designed not only to enhance the overall discourse surrounding IOHK but also to demonstrate its capacity for substantial and positive transformative change. By showcasing successful

31. Nur Saidah Omar, “Is Muhammad Kamal Hassan Framework of Acquired Knowledge New?,” *International Journal of Management and Applied Science* 3, no. 1 (January 2017): 31–35.

initiatives, the goal is to foster a more informed and constructive conversation about IOHK, emphasising its potential for bringing about meaningful and beneficial advancements.³²

Addressing Contemporary Issues

The idea of “Islamicising the self” refers to a significant contemplative process that is informed by Islamic values.³³ This entails making decisions that are consistent with Islamic teachings in terms of behaviour, values, and morality. Through developing a mindful understanding of their moral obligations, people can help bring equilibrium back to a world impacted by today’s issues. Explaining the role of academic staff of IIUM, Kamal reminded:

As “knowledge workers” in IIUM, our academic staff—both locals and internationals—must orient themselves to the mission of Islamisation, at least, at two levels: personal Islamisation, i.e., Islamisation of the self; and academic Islamisation i.e., Islamisation of the curriculum.³⁴

The Islamisation of the self, he said, is crucial in playing the role as educators in addition to lending authenticity and substance to the Islamisation of the curriculum in which staff are involved.³⁵

Including Islamic perspectives in the discussion is offered as a strategic approach to increase the applicability of IOHK in a variety of academic fields. By bridging the gap between traditional Islamic wisdom and contemporary knowledge, this integration aims to promote a comprehensive understanding that can guide the solution to challenging issues. The initiative aims to address current global concerns in a more inclusive and culturally sensitive manner by including Islamic perspectives into academic discussions.

To empower students in effectively struggling with modern challenges, the proposal recommends providing opportunities for international interchange and critical thinking training. Students’ perspectives are expanded through international exchanges, which expose them to a variety of academic and cultural environments. In addition, critical thinking instruction gives students the analytical abilities needed to successfully navigate the complexity of today’s problems. With this combined approach, their professional skills will be improved, and they will be ready to make a significant contribution to the global conversation on urgent issues. Integrating Islamic principles with the

32. Ibid.

33. Wan Nur Madiha, “Webinar on Islam and English Studies,” 128–32.

34. As cited in Mohd Mumtaz Ali, “Islamization of Human Knowledge: From Prof. Kamal’s Perspective,” *Revelation and Science* 13, no. 02 (2023): 62–75.

35. Ibid.

idea of global citizenship is the main objective. Through the development of a sense of duty towards the Muslim ummah as well as the larger global community, students are prepared to contribute morally and intelligently to the advancement of society. This synthesis is in line with the overarching goals of IOHK, presenting it as a transformational force that not only resolves pressing issues but also cultivates a worldview grounded in moral principles and a dedication to constructive change.

To sum up, this point highlights how IOK has the ability to transcend beyond theoretical talks and actively participate in fixing problems in the actual world. Through embracing the process of “Islamising” oneself, incorporating Islamic viewpoints into scholarly discussions, and offering students chances for global exposure and critical thinking, this approach aims to produce a generation of professionals who can effectively navigate and constructively influence the complicated landscape of modern issues.

Islamisation of Curriculum and Textbooks

Within the educational system, this addition lays a strong emphasis on how the curriculum and texts are becoming more and more Islamised.³⁶ The fundamental idea is to apply the Islamic worldview to educational goals in order to facilitate a paradigm shift towards a curriculum that is firmly based on Islamic values. A number of essential strategies are suggested in order to actualise this transformative process, including the development of a coherent educational philosophy grounded in Islamic principles and the operationalisation of basic ideas such as *ʿubūdiyyah* (servanthood) and *khilāfah* (stewardship or vicegerency). The Islamisation of the curriculum entails a fundamental reorientation of educational objectives and practices, going beyond the simple addition of content. The curriculum, according to the idea, should be based on the Islamic worldview, in which knowledge, subject specialisation, the nature of the learner, and modern life itself are all understood through the lens of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. Through the integration of Islamic ideas into the educational philosophy, establishments can create a guiding framework that is consistent with IIUM’s wider objectives.

The development of a coherent educational philosophy founded on Islamic values is an essential first step in this process. This entails outlining the core purposes and aims of education and serving as a beacon of guidance for all parties involved in the field of education, such as state officials, school administrators, instructors, parents, and students. The philosophy serves as an educational compass, giving the entire endeavour of education direction

36. Md. Helal Uddin and Manjurul Alam Mazumder, “Islamization of Knowledge: An Exploratory Study of Concepts, Issues and Trends,” *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 1, no. 6 (2014): 99–109.

and consistency. In order to make these complex notions understandable and applicable in an educational setting, it also entails translating abstract ideas like *ʿabd* and *khalīfah* into operational words.

In addition, the suggestion emphasises how crucial it is to supplement Islamic teachings with scientific studies on the psychology of learning and the learner. By fusing ancient Islamic wisdom with cutting-edge educational insights, this synthesis provides a thorough awareness of the learner's needs and the process of acquiring information. The ultimate aim is to design a curriculum that supports students' holistic development in accordance with Islamic beliefs, in addition to imparting knowledge. Institutions can establish an educational environment that cuts across disciplinary boundaries by instructional methods firmly rooted in Islamic educational philosophy. Because Islam is universal, this strategy may accommodate people from all walks of life in addition to Muslims.

In conclusion, this idea views the process of Islamising the curriculum as a transformative one that incorporates Islamic values into the core of education. Institutions can provide a comprehensive educational experience that embodies the values and principles of IIUM by developing a coherent educational philosophy, putting fundamental ideas into practical terms, and fusing Islamic teachings with contemporary educational research. This method has the potential to provide students with a strong foundation in Islamic beliefs, enabling them to deal with the complexity of the modern world. It also promotes in them a profound sense of purpose, ethics, and responsibility.

Strategies for Communicating Islamicisation Work

The practical implementation of IOHK requires effective communication strategies to reach a broader audience beyond academic circles.³⁷ The recommended approaches include publishing various materials—from scholarly journals and research monographs to accessible leaflets and textbooks—while also organising seminars, conferences, and workshops. These gatherings create dynamic forums for academics, researchers, and interested parties to engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange ideas. In this context, Mumtaz Ali's initiative to organise training sessions for IIUM academic staff serving as a promising example. A crucial aspect of successful IOHK communication lies in ensuring that materials are both comprehensible and accessible. Publications should avoid excessive technical jargon that might alienate non-specialists, instead focusing on clear and straightforward communication that facilitates understanding and engagement. In the digital age, online platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for reach and accessibility, enabling IOHK works

37. Muhammad Obaidullah, "The Role of Universities towards Islamization of Knowledge: The IIUM as a Model," *Bangladesh Journal of Islamic Thought* 6, no. 8 (2010): 123–42.

to connect with a global audience through social media outreach, webinars, and digital publishing. Community engagement extends beyond academic circles through outreach initiatives and partnerships with local organisations. This comprehensive communication approach aims to bridge knowledge gaps and make IOHK works publicly available through various channels, supporting both scholarly communication and broader public dialogue. Such an approach aligns with IOHK's overall objective of making a meaningful impact on both individuals and communities, transforming it into a collaborative effort with societal relevance.

Integrating the Discussion of Tripartite Concepts of Dīn al-Islām: Islām, Īmān, and Iḥsān

Building upon Kamal's foundational work on the IOHK and his emphasis on the *ulū al-albāb* model, this article proposes integrating the tripartite concept of *dīn al-Islām*—that is, the three concepts of *islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*—as a developmental framework for IOHK implementation. While he established the crucial importance of integrating *kitāb takwīnī* with *kitāb tadwīnī* through spiritually and intellectually developed scholars, the tripartite concept of *dīn al-Islām* offers a more structured pathway for achieving this integration. The proposed framework suggests that IOHK can be understood and implemented at three progressive levels, corresponding to the three dimensions of *dīn al-Islām*. At the foundational level of *Islām*, knowledge integration begins with the conscious application of Islamic principles and guidelines in academic and professional work. This represents the external manifestation of IOHK, where scholars actively incorporate Islamic perspectives into their disciplines. Moving deeper, the *īmān* level builds upon Kamal's emphasis on the "Islamisation of self" as a prerequisite for effective IOHK. At this stage, scholars develop a profound internal conviction about the unity of knowledge, recognizing both natural and revealed knowledge as different manifestations of divine truth. This inner conviction shapes their worldview and approach to knowledge integration. The highest level, *iḥsān*, aligns with Kamal's description of the ideal *ulū al-albāb* intellectual. At this stage, scholars achieve excellence in knowledge integration, approaching their academic work with constant God-consciousness and embodying the qualities of "inheritors of the Prophets" (*warathat al-anbiyā*). Their pursuit and integration of knowledge become acts of worship characterised by the highest moral and ethical standards.

This expanded framework enhances the implementation of IOHK by providing clear developmental stages while maintaining alignment with Kamal's original vision. It offers practical guidance for institutions and individuals working toward the ideals of integrated Islamic knowledge, suggesting that different approaches and expectations might be appropriate at different stages of development. Through this enhanced understanding, the IOHK process

becomes more accessible and achievable, while still maintaining its ultimate goal of producing scholars who can successfully integrate scientific understanding with religious wisdom and moral consciousness.

Conclusion

To sum up, this extensive review of IOHK has covered a wide range of ground, from policy statements to the real-world applications and critiques. The review demonstrated constructive, fair, comprehensive, and inclusive methods, illuminating the subtle criticisms of Western knowledge that are contained within the IOHK framework. It was made obvious how IOHK and the Relevantisation of IRK differ from one another, which helped make sense of the areas in which each is applicable. A critical analysis was conducted on the multidisciplinary approach of IOHK and the delicate balancing act between spiritual vision and educational realities. The critiques re-evaluate the principles of IOHK and enhance Kamal's classification. The recommended suggestions to the IOHK philosophy include a wide range of important components and topics, including addressing modern concerns, promoting international collaboration, recognising reform accomplishments, and integrating the tripartite concept of *dīn al-Islām*. This holistic strategy acknowledges that IOHK plays a crucial role in attaining complete knowledge integration within the framework of Islamic scholarship and aims to contribute to its continuous refinement and application.

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