

Assessment in Islamic Perspective: Balancing Knowledge, Intention Character, and Accountability

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ABSTRACT

The said paper regarding the assessment in Islamic perspective: Balancing Knowledge, Character and Accountability. Further the assessment in Islamic education extends beyond measuring cognitive achievement; it incorporates a holistic framework that emphasizes intellectual development ('ilm), moral character (akhlāq), intention (niyyah), and accountability (muḥāsabah). That is rooted on the principals of fairness, ethics and justice. The Islamic assessment cultivates the academic competency and spiritual competency in the learner and teacher. The present study is qualitative and thematic analysis approaches were used, while taking the faculty from Islamic studies department of Higher educational instructions. The senior academia with more than ten years of teaching experience with the doctorate of education was taken for the opinion. The findings, underscore the reforms of the capacity building, development of the framework on the research issue were proposed and further it was recommended that, the Islamic vision need to align with the holistic human development.



Introduction

In the perspective of Higher Education reform, Islamic Education and its core foundation offers a multidimensional approach by acknowledging the Knowledge (ilm) ethical character (akhlaq), sincere intention and divine accountability (hisab). However, the currently the assessment at Pakistani universities are emphasizing on the cognitive approaches. They totally ignoring the Islamic spiritual and values allocated for the assessment (Halsted, et al., 2004). So, the current study explores the Islamic principal of assessment. This study also integrated into assessment framework for the guideline for the educational assessment.

Knowledge ('Ilm)

In Islam, 'Ilm (knowledge) is considered a sacred trust and a form of worship, not merely an instrument for material gain. It is rooted in the Qur'anic command to "read" (Iqra), which highlights the divine significance of seeking knowledge (Sardar et al., 2021). It is also evident from the literature that the traditional scholars, often focus on the critical thinking, and memorization of the concepts (Alghamdi et al., 2022). It is also evident from the practices of the Islamic values that, the ethical values of Islamic knowledge is the life line. This is also supported by the findings of the (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Character (Akhlak)

Every religion focusses on the values, of peace love and tolerance, moreover on the character as well. This phenomenon is also focus on the education and training at the same time, and the core responsible of these activities are the educational institutions. So, the inculcation of these values in the academia is more important as compare to the learner, as it is evident, from the results of the multiple researches that, good teacher produce good learner, quality teacher produce quality students and excellence teacher produce quality learner. These findings are also supported by the (Abdullah et al., 2021). The values sub parts of the charter, as honesty, fairness and justice, prevails toward the ideal citizen of the country, which creates, balance in the society. These are also supported by (Rahman et al., 2023).

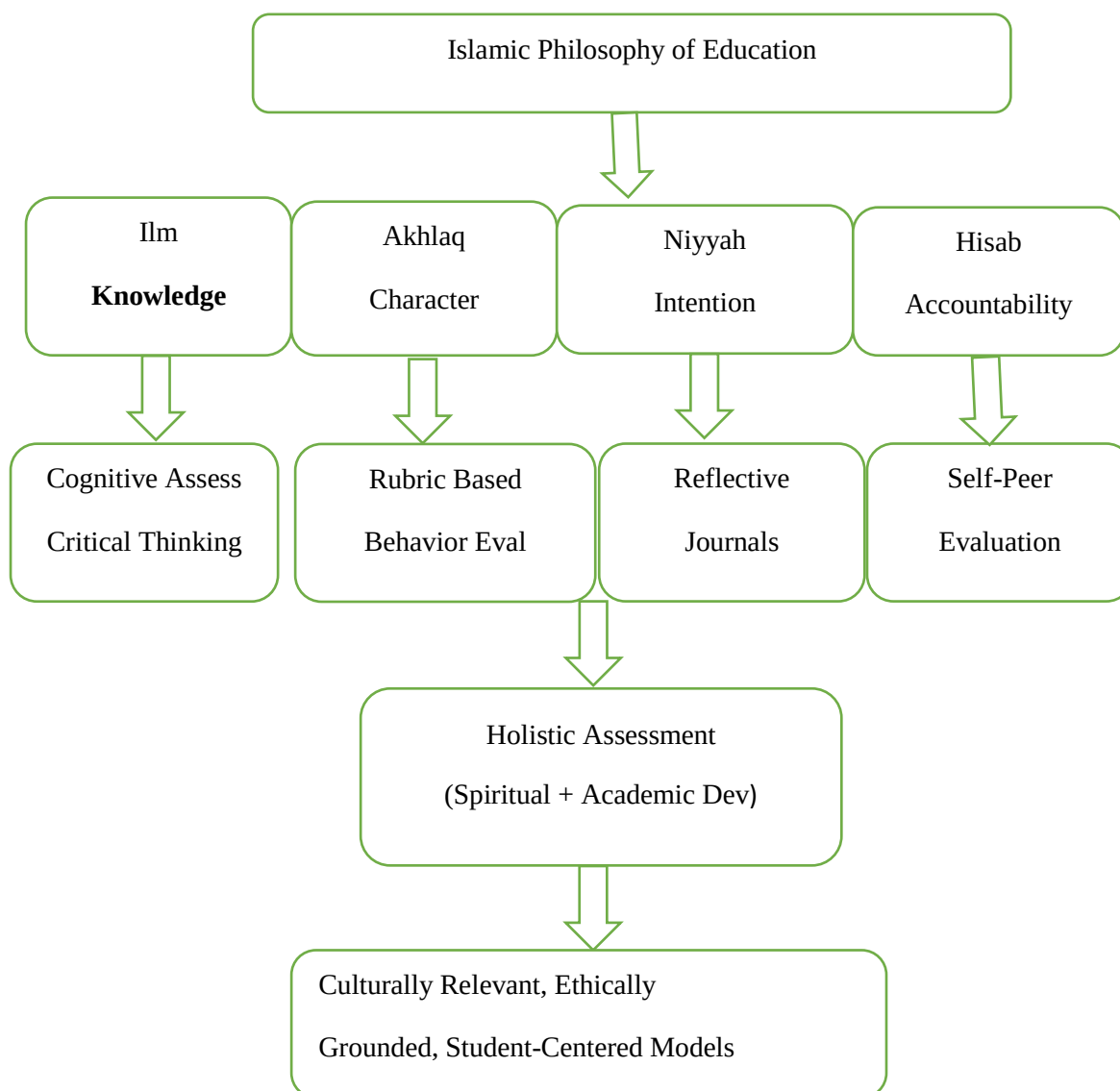
Intention (Niyyah)

One of the other concepts of Niyyah (intention) plays a pivotal role in Islamic core values. epistemology. These also illustrated by the Al-Attas (1993) asserts that the sincerity of one's is founded on the intention. Moreover, the intension determines the ethical and spiritual value of any action of the individual. Further, in educational contexts, this translates to assessing not only outcomes but also student effort, purposefulness, and motivation (Nizami et al., 2021). To know about the niyyah encourages intrinsic motivation and fosters a growth mindset grounded in spiritual accountability. Many of the Islamic model emphasized on the development of the values in the form of intention of the individual. These findings also supported by the (Yusof et al., 2024).

Accountability (Hisab)

In Islam the human is accountability (Hisab) of his and her each and every act in this world as well in front of Allah. Islamic teaching and pedagogy inculcate the values and develop the thought and responsibility of the accountability in the teacher and learner as well. It was also emphasized that, the accountability is basic skill for developing balance in the society. This finding is also supported by (Badri, et al., 2000). In the meanwhile, the assessment, therefore, also create the sense of responsibility, for nurturing the students as a valuable citizen of the society. This also supported by the (Khan, et al., 2023). Moreover, the educational reforms that focus on ethical learning and in result the outcomes and community service-based evaluations are gaining traction in Islamic at large in the universities of the world (Azmi et al., 2022). It is also concluded that, the accountability develops the sense of responsibility, that lead toward the balanced and refine citizen of the society.

Conceptual Frame of the Study of the present study is as:



Methodology and Procedure of the Study

The present study is qualitative in nature and the thematic analysis applied to evaluate the responses of the faculty selected for the said study taken from the various universities of the Pakistan. The faculty from the Islamic studies department with more than five years teaching experience with the minimum qualification of the PhD were taken for the said purpose. The convenience sampling approach was adopted for the said purpose. The purpose of the selection of these population were, their insight about the religious values, that can help to inculcate the values for the assessment on the above title parameters.

The target population comprised faculty members from Islamic Studies departments in public-sector universities in Punjab, Pakistan. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to identify participants who had a minimum of five years of teaching experience and were actively involved in academic assessment. The sample included twenty ($N = 50$) faculty members from four public universities: University of the Punjab, Lahore; Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan; Islamia University of Bahawalpur; and Government College University, Faisalabad. These universities were selected due to their longstanding tradition in Islamic scholarship and their representative diversity in terms of geography and institutional scale.

For collection of the data the semi structure was planned, and telephonically and via email, the said faculty are requested for their responses on the selected research problem. The responses of the interviews and individual opinion on the Islamic values of intention, knowledge, intention and accountability were recorded. The responses were filtered and unnecessary and irrelevant data and information were removed from the record

The thematic approach was applied for the analysis of the data, the data was gathered, codified and then convert in the thematic area of the four dimension and then narrated in the form themes as illustrated below. The thematic analysis was aligned with the four factors, knowledge, intention, character and Accountability. The details findings of the thematic analysis areas:

Findings of the Thematic Analysis

All the point of views of the Islamic scholar of the universities about the four major themes were recorded in aligned with the assessment at university level. The details of each theme are as:

Thematic Analysis 1: Knowledge (‘Ilm) and Intellectual Depth

The respondent of the study those are working faculty of the Islamic studies department are emphasized that, current assessment system is based on the memorization, and it's not developing in-depth Knowledge in the student. This is only preparing the learner for the award of the degree of the various level, they are actually lacking in the form of real knowledge. The real knowledge can only be treated with the help of training and capacity building of the faculty. There is dire need of the establish a faculty development program for the comprehensive of the faculty for the proper delivery of the knowledge. The findings are also supported by Nasr's et al., (1994).

Thematic Analysis 2: Character (Akhlaq) as a Core Metric

The results of the all the participants are supported that integration of the character in the formal assessment is necessary. The character is not a trait, but also the outcomes of the education and training. The character is core and basic fundamental of the peace of the society. In educational institution the respect of others, is very important. The relation with peers, the punctuality at workplace, commitment with job, professionalism, justice with work and judicial resources are foundations. This is also evidence from the result of all the participants, and same was also supported by (Halstead,et al., 2025). The open ended and the opinion of the faculty supported that the standard form of the character values in the form of rubric need to be prepared for the capacity buildings of other for the smooth conduct of workplace as well as the values inculcation in the learner.

Thematic Analysis 3: Intention (Niyyah) and Motivation

The respondent of the study faculty of Islamic studies department of the universities, that are the part of the study, widely emphasized on the intention of the individual. They also link it with good and bad intension of the individual, but the education can play a pivotal role for widely recognized that intention (niyyah) plays a critical role in Islamic process of learning and assessment. However, they also admit the inherent difficulty of objectively evaluating internal motivations. Participants proposed the use of reflective essays, oral interviews, and learning journals as methods for gauging students' sincerity, effort, and learning goals. One teacher remarked, "We should ask why students want to learn, not just what they know." This theme reflects Al-Attas' (1993) position that the educational process in Islam must account for the spiritual and ethical intentions behind the pursuit of knowledge. Faculty pointed out that optimism that intention-based tools could humanize assessment and deepen learner engagement, provided they are implemented with clarity and fairness in day-to-day affairs as well in the professional life to.

Thematic Analysis 4: Accountability (Hisab) and Moral Responsibility

As the last and final theme of the hisab is very pivotal, the life span over this concept. All the acts of individuals are linked with this approach; these values also need to be inculcated as we are accountable at our day-to-day affairs as well in the professional life and in front of Allah as well. The final theme centered on the concept of hisab, or internal accountability to God and society. Faculty described this as the moral compass guiding both educators and learners in their academic endeavors. Respondents argued that true learning in Islam is inseparable from spiritual development and moral consciousness. As one faculty member stated, “True learning involves preparing for life and the Hereafter. Current systems ignore this.” Respondents pointed that conventional grading systems focus exclusively on extrinsic performance metrics, which neglect the formation of ethical responsibility. Respondents also pointed to institutional constraints, such as lack of training in Islamic pedagogical models and pressure to conform to secular benchmarks, as impediments to cultivating a spiritually responsive assessment environment (Che Noh et al., 2025).

Summary Table-1: Themes and Interpretive Highlights

Theme	Islamic Principle	Interpretive Insight
Knowledge (‘Ilm)	Intellectual depth	Critical thinking and practical application
Character (Akhlaq)	Moral behavior	Institutional framework and Character mechanism
Intention (Niyyah)	Sincere motivation	Learning effort and Clarity
Accountability (Hisab)	Moral responsibility	External Performance and Motivation.

The insights gathered from faculty respondents pointed out the four fundamental pillars of Islamic educational philosophy as they relate to assessment practices. These pillars are including knowledge, character, intention, and accountability. Each of these themes provides a different perspective on the deficiency of current assessment systems and offers direction for more value-driven reforms in the assessment phenomena.

In perspective of knowledge (‘ilm), faculty members of Islamic studies department show concern about the widespread reliance on memorization in assessments as necessary part. They noted that students are often rewarded for recalling factual information rather than being encouraged to think critically or apply their knowledge to practical situations. This approach, according to participants, falls short of the Islamic ideal of meaningful learning, which seeks to cultivate wisdom and thoughtful engagement with knowledge. There was a strong consensus among respondents that assessment methods must be reformed to promote intellectual depth, problem solving, and real-life application.

When discussing character (akhlaq), the participants emphasized the essential role of moral development in Islamic education. Traits such as honesty, responsibility, humility, and respect are deeply embedded in Islamic teaching and should be central to student evaluation. However, the findings revealed that despite strong personal support for including character in assessment, there is a lack of formal structures or institutional policies to support this goal. Many educators rely on personal judgment or informal observations, which limits consistency and accountability in character-based evaluation.

The theme of intention (niyyah) was frequently mentioned in relation to student motivation and personal effort. Faculty highlighted the Islamic view that the sincerity of one’s intention is what gives value to any action, including learning. In this regard, several participants proposed the use of reflective tools such as journals, self-assessments, or learning portfolios to help uncover

students' genuine efforts and purpose. These methods were seen as valuable for shifting focus from outcomes alone to the inner motivations that drive learning.

Finally, the concept of accountability (*hisab*) emerged as a crucial but underrepresented element in current assessment systems. In Islamic thought, accountability extends beyond institutional expectations to include personal responsibility before God. Participants advocated for educational practices that nurture this internal sense of moral responsibility. They stressed that assessments should not only measure academic performance but also help students develop self-discipline, ethical awareness, and a sense of duty toward others. Encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and moral reasoning was seen as essential for achieving this goal.

Discussion

The findings of this study resonate deeply with the foundational principles of Islamic educational philosophy, particularly the concepts of knowledge (*'ilm*), intention (*niyyah*), character (*akhlaq*), and accountability (*hisab*). These outcomes extend and reinforce the perspectives advanced by Halstead (2007), Badri (2000), and Al-Attas (1993), emphasizing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of assessment. Faculty participants expressed a strong individual commitment to embedding Islamic values within assessment practices; however, they encountered systemic challenges due to institutional inertia and the prevailing dominance of secular evaluation models.

Furthermore, the study reflects concerns raised by Altbach and Salmi (2011) regarding the global dependence on standardized assessment frameworks that often disregard indigenous epistemologies. In the context of Pakistan, this has resulted in a noticeable disconnection between the current assessment systems and core Islamic values particularly in the domains of moral character development and the recognition of students' intentions.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the literature review and the thematic analysis of the faculty that, they said study highlights the urgent needs of the reforms in the assessment system of the higher education a institutional in a country like Pakistan. The faculty need to be trained on the basis of the Islamic values and thought. The training of the academia needs to be done on the basis of Islamic values and that may align with the assessment. That will lead toward the quality of outcomes in the form of students. A frame work need to be establish for the quality assurance align with the values of the Islamic thought.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above conclusion of the study, the recommendation of the study are as: These findings, are based on the literature review and the result of the thematic analysis of the study.

- i. There should be an incorporation of the Islamic thought in the grading system of the learner and must be the part of assessment.
- ii. The faculty must be trained on the values of the Islamic system.
- iii. The sincerity needs to be inculcated through the Islamic values.
- iv. The Islamic scholar needs to be collaborated through inter disciplinary approached for the promotion of the Islamic values.
- v. The Islamic should be part of the quality assurance frame work of the study.

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