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AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON MANAGING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: TOWARD A GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

ABDULLA H. ABDUL-GADER
AND
MUHAMMAD A. AL-BURAEG

INTRODUCTION

As the second largest religion in the world, Islam plays a central role in shaping the beliefs and behaviour of more than one billion Muslims. One of the most serious problems hindering development in the Muslim world is the lack of efficacious strategies for the productive utilization of Information Technology (IT). This deficiency has been the prime concern of many scholars and administrators. Even with abundant monetary and economic resources in at least some Muslim countries, these countries are in desperate need of an "endogenous" perspective on IT management. For without effective IT utilization, both organizational and material resources are likely to be wasted and depleted. The price of mismanagement of IT for any country is high and often prohibitive.

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Without giving proper consideration to social and contextual factors, IT management may engender greater inefficiency than it eradicates.

This paper proposes to develop an "endogenous" perspective on IT management for the Muslim world. For Muslim countries, "endogeneity" refers primarily to the interpretation of human knowledge and development of management models in the light of the teachings of Islam. The proposed endogenous perspective on IT management is introduced and developed from within, in a manner that would be contextually relevant.

Such an effort would be a step toward enhancing global understanding. It would also benefit the increasing number of multinational corporations involved in a variety of business projects in the Muslim countries. It is imperative for the managers of such projects, therefore, to understand the cultural implications of IT management. The relationship between the host country and Multi-National Corporations (MNC) has drawn the attention of many researchers. The discussion centres around issues such as technology transfer, transfer-pricing, government intervention, and cultural effects. Drucket has stressed the significance of understanding local values, attitudes, and management practices for enhancing the effectiveness of multinational corporations. Native and MNC managers can reassess themselves and the organizations of which they are a part, not only as recipients of a superior technology, but also as participants in a process of global sharing of ideas. But this will not happen until the managers of IT in these countries are filled with self-reliance and creativity. For Muslims, one can safely say that looking either to the West or the East for prepackaged management models would itself be counterproductive, let alone its being antithetical to the very spirit of IT assimilation.

The paper is organized as follows: in section one the importance of contextual IT analysis is emphasized. Section two discusses the various facets of the Islamic perspective and its implications for IT management. Section three compares some aspects of the perspective with Western management models. The last section concludes the discussion.

I

IT MANAGEMENT: A CONTEXTUAL VIEW

Computerization in Muslim countries faces many problems that hamper attainment of optimum benefits. These problems include lack of communication and other vital infrastructure, severe foreign exchange shortage, inadequate computer skill, and lack of local vendor support. In
addition to these factors, organizational and cultural factors contribute to the challenge of assimilating IT. IT systems are evidently not built in a vacuum. They are planned, designed, and programmed and used by organizational members — managers, analysts, programmers, and users — within an organizational and cultural context. The cultural values and norms of users, designers and managers play a major role in making IT systems succeed or fail. Therefore, the potentials of a computer-based system are not subject to its technical merits only but are also dependent on the extent to which they are congruent with such ground realities as the social institutions and cultural matrix of the countries concerned. In fact such a broader view of computer-based systems is gaining popularity in academic and industrial circles of the developed countries.

While technical factors are attributes of the computer systems — and are, therefore, relevant across organizations and countries — social institutions and cultural matrix are not so. The experience of an MNC in implementing computer application in two Latin American countries illustrates the importance of social and cultural factors in systems development. The same application has failed in one country, while it has succeeded in others. The difference in the implementation outcomes between the two countries was attributed to several organizational and cultural factors, including the users' perceived threats from the system, lack of the availability of users' involvement, lack of manuals in local languages, and lack of due local representation in the project team.

Information technology applications are, as we have argued, embedded in the social context, which encompasses the social relations among the participating parties in the information technology application, the infrastructure resources that support information technology, and the history of commitments in and around the IT applications. Others have extended the social context to include the wider social, economic, political, technological, and competitive forces surrounding the organizations concerned.

The cry to the contingency analysis is not recent. Pioneering works such as Thompson and March and Simon point to the importance of environmental conditions, technology, and cultural patterns among other factors. They look at the organization as an open system that both affects and is affected by its environment. Any attempt to isolate the organization and treat it as a laboratory experiment is bound to fail. Therefore, importing and imposing technical solutions that were made in other cultural contexts is a gainless effort. According to Lind:

Many enthusiastic computer projects in developing countries have been launched which computer solutions, successfully implemented somewhere
else, have failed to perform, often because the actual reality was never fully understood (values, authority patterns, rationality, time concepts, etc.).11

Lind provides a detailed discussion of the experience of the largest Arab automobile manufacture, El Nasr Automotive Company (NASCO) of Egypt. NASCO was trying to implement a computerized industrial production system. The system is an IBM software package known as COPICS (Communication Oriented Production Information and Control System). Lind questions the applicability of such ready-made production solutions and in this regard cites the unique contextual factors affecting NASCO. Discussing cultural and institutional questions (bureaucracy, authority, time concept, etc.) and structural issues (currency shortage, and the availability or otherwise of the required skills), Lind persuasively concludes that the cultural concept that includes norms of rationality determines the degree of success of any system. The COPICS does not have the technical characteristics or the technical capability which, in the first place, determine its applicability. Of primary importance is how the problem-solving design of the programme and the implicit assumptions regarding the rational behaviour and practice of the users of information technology can be utilized.12

Proper appreciation of the organizational and cultural components of information technology applications is definitely a step forward toward increasing the likelihood of the success of information technology applications. To ensure the acceptance of IT applications in Muslim countries, it is necessary that the operating organizations develop a contextual perspective. For example, the individual Muslim’s attitude and subsequently his behaviour toward IT is influenced by his society, his organization, and his work environment. An individual’s assessment of the effect of these systems upon his job-related duties can also affect his acceptance rate. The congruity of IT management policies with the culture of the countries concerned and their individual, organizational, and societal levels are the most important factors in ensuring the acceptability of those policies.

The following section discusses the various facets of the Islamic perspective and some of its implications for IT management.

II

IT MANAGEMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

In this section, we shall essay a perspective on man and IT management
that is relevant for an Islamic society. We shall discuss the Islamic view of human nature, the basic functions of man, man's responsibilities and accountability, and his social behaviour. In essence, we are interested in illustrating some facets of the effects of such a view on managing IT in Muslim countries.

Islam provides not only a simple, clear and comprehensive central core of beliefs, but also an extensive, all-inclusive body of instructions regarding the intellectual and behavioural orientation of the believer. The often-made statement that Islam is a way of life is quite literally true. Islam presents itself as a single unit teaching that man should worship the One True God in all aspects of his life.

In devising any strategy for IT management or for the development and modernization of any society a genuine and clear understanding of the basic and most important element in that development — man himself — would be absolutely necessary. A broad framework for human psychology is found in the Qur'ān itself. The following Qur'ānic verses are interlinked and are complementary to those that state man’s responsibility and accountability for his actions. Verses such as these reflect some psychological traits of man and his soul:

Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds . . . (74: 38).
That no one shall bear another's load; man would receive only that for which he had striven (50: 38-39).
. . . Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts (13: 11).

These verses emphasize the fact that Allah’s actions relative to man are dependent upon man’s own behaviour.

Muslim scholars in the field of psychology and the related social sciences have attempted to build an Islamic theory of psychology based on the Islamic concepts concerning man and his nature. Sayyid Qutb, one of the best known Egyptian scholars and interpreters of the Qur’ān of the present century, has outlined a three-point psychological theory. First, Islam holds man in very high esteem by declaring him to be responsible for his actions and allowing him complete freedom of choice. Man has also been granted a position that is worthy of the creature to whom Allah has granted preference over other creatures.

Second, Islam places man’s fate in his own hands and makes the responsibility for that fate rest ultimately with him. This is apt to incite a feeling of awareness, caution, and heeding Allah (i.e. man’s conscious and positive awareness of Allah). The Muslim knows that the Will of Allah is fulfilled through his own modes of activity and courses of
action. He believes, as stated earlier, that Allah would never change the situation or circumstances of any people unless they themselves change it. This, in itself, is a difficult task that requires full awareness and acuteness of mind.

Qutb also asserts that Islam reminds man of his perpetual need to refer to the criteria laid down by Allah. The firm standards that God has revealed are intended to ensure that man's whimsical desires do not overcome him. This will also enable him to adhere to the teachings of God that God desires man to follow his guidance and keep to the path.  

For MNC managers, understanding these points is quite essential for dealing with Muslims for the purpose of cooperation, project assignments and such other activities.

Shariati succinctly presents the Islamic perspective on human nature, the basic functions of man, and his responsibilities and accountabilities in these words:

"In Islam, man is not weak and disabled before Allah since he is His representative, His friend and His trustee on this earth. All the angels had to prostrate to him. A dualistic human with such a great responsibility needs a religion to lead him neither toward absolute asceticism nor toward absolute materialism, but toward a state of balance. He needs a dualistic religion to fulfill the great responsibility he accepted; that is Islam.""  

The term "dualistic" here means that by nature man is neither totally ascetic nor fully materialistic though he can be both. Islam as a total system of life provides him with a force that enables him to achieve a balance by rectifying such elements within himself.

Pezeshkpur claims that Muslims are averse to planning of any sort because of their belief that the future is tied up with the will of God. Besides resisting planning, Muslims are characterised by low personal aspiration, helplessness, distrust, low personal status, and subdued expressions of opinion.

Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. It is this kind of misunderstanding that can harm MNC managers and give them a false picture of Islam and Muslims. This one is likely to lead to a biased action and behaviour in dealing with Muslims as employees, partners, customers, and suppliers. It is also this kind of misunderstanding that can negatively affect the professional performance of MNC managers. Such misconceptions about Islam and Muslims may also endanger a managers' relationship with Muslim employees, customers, and/or associates. Although such misconceptions about the role of the individual in controlling the future do exist among some Muslims. Those Muslims
who are looked upon as role models in Muslim societies act in a manner which conforms with the views of Qutb and Shariati. This implies that a Muslim should act as if he will live forever and not question his ability to plan for the future, expecting blessings from Allah.

From the above discussion, we can derive the following implication for IT planning:

Implication one: IT planning as a concept should be advocated among Muslim managers. Any misconception based on the misunderstanding of the Islamic view regarding the future should be clarified. IT planning is a major activity which is likely to ensure an efficient and effective use of IT.

In its comprehensive outlook on man, Islam attempts to strike a balance between man's material and rational needs and his spiritual and mental requirements. Islam calls for moderation. A number of Qur'ānic verses and several sayings of the Prophet (peace be on him) exalt the pursuit of knowledge and learning. So, Islam does not at all condemn science and technology as such. Indeed, Islam stands for progress, development, and even a kind of "modernization" which is not inconsistent with the principles of Islam. Time and again the Qur'ān calls upon man to reflect and ponder over nature, over the earth and sky, the wind and the rain, the sun, the moon, and the constellations. Actually, the striving to bring about modernization — a modernization understood in its good and healthy sense — can itself be viewed as a religiously-motivated act.

Implication two: IT is seen as an important development tool that should be used to enhance productivity and to acquire competitive advantages for the Muslim state. The Islamist's contribution in assimilating IT into his work can even be viewed as an act of worship that is rewarded not just materially but also spiritually.

From an Islamic perspective, the true Muslim has several distinguishing traits and qualities. We would like to call this genre of Muslims the "Islamist" whom we would describe as being an active member of the Islamic organizations that operate in Muslim countries regardless of gender, race, or social class. In the context of IT management, the Islamist can be the IT manager, IT professional, or IT user. The Islamist is the major actor in making and implementing IT decisions in the Islamic environment. Thus, it is necessary for MNC managers to understand this distinction so as to ensure better management.
To help the MNC managers in making the distinction, we shall highlight several characteristics of the Islamist. First, the Islamist is committed to a cause which requires him to understand the theory and practice of the process of Islamization because of its extreme value in the realm of management. The Islamization process as described in the scarce and scattered Islamic literature means "the overdue need for derivation, development and systematic examination of the Islamic theory of social change and its validity in contemporary society". The general objective of this process is to reinstate the lost Islamic values in every area of human activity including IT management. What is needed now is a detailed answer to the question: "How can modern thought be Islamized"? Moreover, this process of Islamization is based on the premise that Islam is both a message and a method. "The way the message is to be conveyed or practiced", according to Idris, "is an inseparable part of that message, and as such cannot be ignored. If this is accepted, then we can always find guidance in the methods employed by the Prophet (peace be on him) in different periods of his life".

Secondly, the Islamist is called upon to derive the Islamic principles of management from the history and life of the Prophet (peace be on him) and from the early period of Islamic civilization. However, it is not necessary to copy the structural systems of their management. Since it is impossible to take an entire historical situation form one period and superimpose it on a later one, history provides us with the spirit and ethics by which managing was carried out in the light of Islam.

Third, and related to the preceding point, the Islamist is called upon to provide a positive and detailed method for managing IT. These should, in our view, proceed from the general to the specific, from the past to the present and future, and from the grand principles to more limited, detailed, and specific guidelines that are addressed to contemporary problems. In other words, the Islamist should choose a specific methodology that can help him in changing his overall programme of reform from the state of "ethical sermon" (preaching) to that of a formulation of the problem, its definition, and the exact process for solving it in a detailed manner.

Let us take a specific case to illustrate this. Often the following verse: "Hire him! For the best (man) that thou canst hire is the strong, the trustworthy" (28: 26) is quoted with the conviction that this is sufficient to guide people in laying down their employment policy. In our view the situation in modern times requires that a detailed list of conditions including, in addition to the conditions mentioned in the above-cited verse, qualifications such as education, experience, and
competence, should be clearly laid down. This leads to arriving at the following implication:

Implication three: The Islamist is expected to manage, operate, and use IT in order to achieve Islamic objectives. However, commitment to these objectives must be synthesized with modern thought in a systematic way, using the tools and techniques of modern technology, and seeking the help and advice, whenever needed, of modern theorists, practitioners, and experts. It is through this practical model that the present credibility gap in Islamic application of various programmes and plans will be overcome. This extensive and important undertaking cannot be achieved overnight. But once a systematic approach is articulated and a serious commitment to Islam is achieved, Islamization will become a progressive process.

The new perspective should reflect the Islamist’s unique characteristics as well as the characteristics embodied in the original Islamic texts so as to absorb new formulations dictated by the change in the time-place context. It should reflect the efforts of the Islamist to vitalize his faith as well as to arouse the spirit of inquiry and self-confidence that Islam seeks to inculcate in its followers. A number of leaders in the Muslim world, however, seek to implement the typical models of modernization at the expense of Islamic identity. On the other hand, some important groups in Muslim societies are concerned with preserving Islamic identity sometimes even at the expense of development, growth, and modernization. But such is the approach of the Islamist that he can satisfy both the purposes. In fact, he stands mid-way between these two extremes.

The importance of the Islamist is reflected in the fact that he recognizes a highly dignified status for man. The Islamist is not only accountable to his superiors but also to God. The fact that Muslims offer prayers five times every day is in itself significant since during these prayers, which are regarded as act of communion with God and which remind every individual that he has to account for his actions. This religious activity also constantly reminds a Muslim of God’s omnipotence even if his actions might not be detected by other human beings. Consequently, observance of prayers is likely to bring about reform in his moral conduct.

Commitment to Islam can also serve as a means to safeguard against the extensive potential for computer abuse. For IT does bring with it a great opportunity for abuses such as invasion of privacy and violation of property rights (e.g. software piracy and copyright), computer related crimes and computer related unemployment. In several societies, these
issues exist mainly for two reasons. First, there are no clear-cut moral
guidelines for those engaged in the computing profession. Second, the
law remains to a large extent shrouded in ambiguity because of the
newness of many of the issues. Straub and Collins advocate that both the
law and ethics in this area should reflect general social values and should
interact to guide practice, but this has not happened yet.18

Unfortunately, law has not "caught up" with the rapidly evolving
technology. Also, the ease with which information can be duplicated and
the adverse public resistance to enforcement of property rights have
limited the effectiveness of legal protection. Therefore, social problems
related to computer abuses can be best controlled through self-regulation
of computer professionals. What are the factors that influence computer
professional attitude towards these social problems and how can self-
regulation be best achieved? This leads us to formulate the following
implication:

Implication four: Islamic ethical teachings provide a safeguard against the
abuses of IT. The Islamist as an IT manager, professional, or user is likely
to be fearful of Allah and more careful in the use of IT.

The Islamic perspective seeks to provide an environment in which
the individual can have constant contact with God. The institutionalized lunch hour in occidental administrative systems, for example,
was designed to feed the body and give it some time to rest so that when
the individual returns to the job, his body is re-energized. The prayer
time, in addition to lunch time, tends to re-energize the spiritual and
psychological part of man just as food does the flesh. A Muslim
psychology professor in a southern US university used to say to his
secretary at the time of prayers, "Hold my phone calls. I am in a
conference with Allah".

The limited practice of prayers in some Muslim countries is in part
responsible for a behaviour which in the West might be sought through
sensitivity training and other forms of organization development (OD).
The Qur'an suggests that all the principles necessary to regulate human
conduct for the development and fulfilment of the human personality are
given through prayer. Ishaque says that "They have been given at a time
in history, and in a form, which imply man's active participation in the
process of his self-development and self-realization".19 Salāh is the
cornerstone of man's spiritual integration and development. Yet the
precise form and manner in which this basic obligation is to be
discharged were left to be determined by the Prophet (peace be on him),
who prescribed variously to cover the widest possible range of situations and circumstances.

Salāh also serves as a socialization process in which there is no rank difference between the executive and the clerk as they stand in one row, shoulder to shoulder, facing Makkah. It is an excellent example of interpersonal relations where elevations of rank and race are levelled out, and where the "boss" and the "caretaker" meet together in a common place (for worship), at least twice during the daily working hours, at noon and afternoon times. The social act of Salāh implies the following:

Implication five: Salāh in the work site usually twice a day (viz. Zuhr and 'Asr), shoulder to shoulder, is apt to enhance the spiritual and social feelings of the Islamist who is an IT user and developer at the same time. It may help in bridging the gap between IT user and IT provider.

How many workers or administrators or both in a non-Muslim (say, a Western) setting see each other or interact face to face or do both in a given day, week, or month? It is common knowledge that any model (of politics, economics, or IT management) in order to be useful and successful has to address itself to the basics of the culture which it is intended to serve. It should reflect that culture's language and history as well as economic, political and social values. The question is: Do such Western models reflect these values? Are these models just purely technical constructs that reflect "the end of ideology", as some maintain?20 Or do they reflect the values, ethics, and heritage of their respective cultures and societies? Answers to these questions provide the alternatives and choices to select appropriate models in managing resources, including IT.

This leads us to provide the reader with a brief comparison between the Islamic model and existing Western models of management to which the following section is devoted.

III

ISLAMIC AND WESTERN MANAGEMENT MODELS

In order to clarify the Islamic perspective it would be useful to compare it with four management models that are currently in vogue in the West. The comparative analysis that follows is based on Frederickson's work on the four Western models.21 The Islamic perspective is culled form the previous discussion and form al-Buraey.22 Table 1 shows several differences among the five models, i.e. the four Western models and the
Islamic model. They differ in terms of empirical focus or unit of analysis, characteristics, and the values they strive to maximize. Unlike the four models shown in Table 1, the Islamic perspective has a religious and secular base and a non-secular orientation. However, like the human relations and public choice models, the Islamic model stresses a human orientation such as worker satisfaction, personal growth, individual dignity, citizen options or choices and equal access to services. This orientation, of course, contradicts the classic bureaucratic and neo-bureaucratic models that put a high premium on production.23

Moreover, the Islamic perspective stresses values, ethics, and moral standards derived from the Islamic sources and seeks to maximize these values. Cooperating rather than competition, consultation and shura rather than authoritarianism in decision-making, non-bureaucratic measures rather than typical bureaucratic attitudes, and moderate leadership authority rather than absolute leadership (a system of superior and subordinate role relationships in which the former is the only source of legitimate influence upon the latter) are the main characteristics of the Islamic perspective.24 Finally, the Islamic model, as shown in the last column in Table 1, emphasizes and seeks to maximize values such as freedom and justice, social equity and human dignity, personal material and spiritual growth, responsiveness to client needs and demands, diligence in work and production, and competence in personnel.

TABLE 1
Islamic Perspective and Contemporary Management Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theories and Theorists</th>
<th>Empirical focus (Unit of Analysis)</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Values to be Maximized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classic Bureaucratic Model</td>
<td>The Organization, Bureau, Work Group</td>
<td>Structure, hierarchy, control, authority, policy-administration dichotomy, chain of command, span of control, merit appointment, centralization</td>
<td>Efficiency, Economy, Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-bureaucratic Model</td>
<td>The decision</td>
<td>Logical positivism, operations research, systems analysis, cybernetics, management science, productivity</td>
<td>Rationality, Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Model</td>
<td>The decision (rational) The decision (incremental) Organizational behaviour</td>
<td>Empirical, positivism, bureaucracy as an expression of culture,</td>
<td>Science ‘Neutral analysis of organizational behaviour, Incrementalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have seen that no model can be sound and effective unless it is grounded in the culture and ideology of the people which it is designed to serve. Binder, for example, attributes the incapability of many Muslim nations to excel in various fields including IT to the following factors: (1) hybrid management base; (2) ethiclessness, and (3) materialism. Most of the extant administrative systems in the Muslim world are hybrids of East and West. Some of them even pose a challenge to, if not neglect, the role of religion. For example, Thompson asserts that modern organizations, because they evolve in response to modern science and technology, reflect the guiding spirit of science and technology, the spirit of rationalism. He further states: "No longer are traditional or religious standards to be the guardians of knowledge. The quest for truth is to be limited and guided only by reason and empirical verification".

In the absence of Islamic values and ethics, modern organizations in the Muslim countries experience ethiclessness. Ethiclessness reflects a myriad of problems ranging from corruption and nepotism to excessive formalism and overlapping. At the same time, maximization of values other than spiritual and psychological is the main characteristic of the existing or extant administrative systems in the Muslim countries.
Preoccupation with rationality, efficiency, economy, and effectiveness (no matter how defined) reflects the pure materialistic concern of these systems to the exclusion of ethical and moral values such as the dignity of the individual, social equity, personal growth, and so forth. Unlike the scientific management movement of Taylor at the beginning of this century, Islamic management does not hold to the view of a "one best way" of doing things. One step toward achieving Islamic values in management, for example, is ensuring that this perspective is neither totally secular in nature nor purely religious. For instance, the value of time is so important in Islam that the five daily prayers have been tied with a specific time-schedule. Likewise, obligatory fasting starts with the beginning of a specific lunar month, Ramadān. Moreover, *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) is performed annually on specified days of a specific month. Thus, the value of time and its use in daily management must be given this kind of orientation rather than a purely materialistic one.

Still another value that Islamic and MNC management should maximize is the spiritual and psychological well-being of the individual and the groups within the organization. Many have emphasized the importance of the analysis of the individual psychology and the logical progression to his relations with other individuals, small groups, and finally large groups.27 We have seen in the previous section how *Ṣalāh* provides an environment in which the individual can have constant contact with God, which re-energizes the spiritual and psychological aspect of the Muslim worker, professional, and manager. The socializing effect of *Ṣalāh* has been effective in bringing all of the organization personnel, the managing and the managed, together at the same place, called *maṣjid* (mosque).

What really distinguishes the Islamic management perspective from the present Western models is the balance between the material and the spiritual and psychological well-being and the development of the individuals and groups in society. Motivation in the Islamic model is not entirely tied up with economic incentives and material rewards notwithstanding their importance. Equality and justice have a yardstick that enjoys sanction from God and is not left to the whims and desires of mortals. Motivating IT professionals, however, has been the centre of attention for many scholars to the exclusion of moral considerations.28 The scarcity of skilled IT professionals and the high rate of turnover among them prompt the management to attempt motivating its IT personnel. Since work is a means and not an end in itself for the Islamist, the spiritual and psychological satisfaction gained form
performing his duty to Allah further motivates him to perform his duties to his peers, boss, clients, and so forth.

Implication six: To motivate IT professionals, management can benefit from the Islamic teachings which portray work as a means and not an end in itself. The spiritual and psychological satisfaction gained from performing duty to Allah further motivates Muslims to perform organizational duties.

The "guiding spirit" is Islam. Management is not and cannot be an independent enterprise by itself. In an Islamic society it will be a part of the overall Islamic system, which is nonsecular in theory, practice, and orientation; thus, management should reflect the nonsecular orientation and values of the total system.

The classical models or theories of organization tend to emphasize organizational structures and administrative procedures designed to ensure rational and predictive employee behaviour. Frederick Taylor's **Scientific Management**, Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick's **Principles of Organization**, and Max Weber's **Bureaucratic Models** are some examples in which the hierarchical method or structure is supreme. "Division of labour", "unit of command", "span of control", and "authority structure" are distinctive principles that reflect the hierarchical nature of these models of organization. This does not mean that all Western models emphasize a hierarchical structure. Models and theories such as human relations and public choice models de-emphasize hierarchy and bureaucratic structure and emphasize interpersonal and intergroup relations, communications, work satisfaction, personal growth and individual dignity, citizens options or choices, and equal access to services.29

In its emphasis on values such as social equity and justice, responsiveness to client needs, and human dignity, the Islamic management perspective resembles the movement towards less materialistic orientation.30 They concur in seeking to change policies and structures that systematically inhibit justice and social equity. Social equity, ethics and morality, humanism and dignity, participation and consultation, and the overall well-being of the human conditions are major considerations in both models.

Even though there are differences between them, the Islamic perspective and the emerging Western approach share the following major concerns about the classical organization theories. Both are bitterly opposed to the current concepts of hierarchy, authority, and value-neutrality of huge and complex bureaucratic organizations. In fact, none
of the basic elements of bureaucracies escape criticism either by the new approach scholars and practitioners in the United States or by those who advocate Islamic alternatives in the Muslim World. Briefly, Waldo (1971), Campbell (1973), Wilburn (1973), Frederickson (1980), and al-Buraey (1990)31 offer the following criticisms:

- misuse of authority and dysfunctional impact of the authority structure itself;
- undue emphasis on efficiency, economy, and effectiveness; emphasis on rationality to the exclusion of other human traits; organizational and bureaucratic tendencies to retain the status quo;
- placing trust in theoretically value-free professionalism;
- improper goal-setting to accommodate the politically powerful at the expense of the disadvantaged groups or those who lack political and economic resources;
- absence of participation by and consultation of employees and client groups in decision-making and goal-setting processes; and
- immorality of organizations and the dehumanizing impact of bureaucratic organization on workers, client groups, and others.

The two movements differ, however. While the Western movement considers life more important than spirit, Islam considers life and spirit, flesh and soul, the material and the non-material equally important. As far as modernization programmes are concerned, one should give as much attention to the development of man's spiritual and psychological well-being as to his physical and material well-being.

Implication seven: IT Islamist considers Islam as his overall "guiding spirit". Working procedures, policies, or strategies that may be perceived as contradicting any Islamic tenets can be resisted, violated, or simply ignored. To the Islamist, Islam comes first. On the other hand, this fact can be used to introduce and promote management decisions if they can be justified Islamically so that IT resistance is minimized.

For MNC clear understanding of the Islamist's "guiding spirit" can save time and effort in dealing with Muslims.

IV

CONCLUSION

Transfer of IT to the Muslim world cannot be attained unless the technology is managed, operated, and used with indigenous techniques.
and models. The management process, in particular, is characterized by heavy contextual relevancy. Insufficient attention to the cultural context of management can result in severe implementation problems. The difficulty of implementing administrative reforms in seven Muslim countries is a typical case in point.32

This paper has provided an outline of an Islamic perspective to IT management in the Muslim world. If recourse is made to the teachings of Islam in interpreting individual's acts and in developing appropriate management practices in Muslim societies, IT management would lead to the development of management models which will be conformable to the genuine needs of those societies. To import prepackaged management models from abroad will be counter-productive and inconsistent with the spirit of IT assimilation.

We have indicated seven IT management implications as derivations from the Islamic perspective. Management of organizations in Muslim countries can benefit from these implications to facilitate IT assimilation by carrying out the following recommendations:

1. Management should advocate IT planning among Muslim managers. They should design training programmes or other promotional channels to eliminate any misconception based on misunderstanding of the Islamic view in regard to the future.
2. Management can reinforce the notion that the employees' contribution in assimilating IT into his work is a religiously praiseworthy act which enriches a man both materially and spiritually.
3. Management should encourage synthesizing Islamic teachings with modern thought in a systematic way, using modern techniques and tools.
4. Management ought to help reinforce Islamic ethical teachings which provide a safeguard against abuses of IT.
5. Management needs to promote social relationship among the employees. Salāh can be seen as a social act that enhances the spiritual and social feelings of the Islamist who is an IT user and developer at the same time.
6. To motivate IT professionals, management can benefit from the Islamic teachings which portray work as a means rather than an end in itself. The spiritual and psychological satisfaction gained from doing one's duty to God further motivates Muslims to perform their organizational duties.
7. Management should introduce, promote, and justify IT on Islamic grounds so that IT resistance is minimized.

Implications for other IT management areas can also be developed as a result of further research. This type of research is important, not only for Islamic countries, but also for the increasing number of multinational corporations which operate in these countries.
Understanding local values, attitudes, and management practices is of fundamental importance for the effectiveness and smooth operation of multinational corporations in the Muslim world.

This paper has addressed the essential dimensions and implications of an Islamic perspective of IT management. It must be emphasized that such Islamic perspective cannot be understood in isolation, but only in the general Islamic environment that includes political and socio-economic systems. Thus, an awareness of the ideology and basic tenets of Islam is required for understanding this Islamic perspective to IT management.

Because of the unique nature of this Islamic perspective, it is not fair to judge it against Western models. After all, it is an Islamic construct and, therefore, it should reflect Islamic values and concerns although such values may contradict the more familiar Western ones. The most important characteristic of this perspective is that it is intended for organizations operating in Muslim countries. Unless this point is kept in mind, the reader will have difficulty in understanding the Islamic perspective and its implication for IT management.


4C. Avgerou, "Computer-Based Information Systems and Modernization of Public Administration in Developing Countries", S. Bhatnagar and N. Bjorn-Andersen, eds. Information Technology in Developing Countries (Amsterdam, North Holland, 1990).


6D. Robey et al, "Implementation Information Systems in Developing Countries: Organizational and Cultural Consideration", S. Bhatnagar and N. Bjorn-Andersen, eds. Information Technology in Developing Countries (Amsterdam: 1990).


9 P. Lind, Computerization in Developing Countries: Model and Realities (London: Routledge, 1991), 5.

10 Ibid., 15.


13 See P. Lind, Computerization in Developing Countries: Model and Realities (London: Routledge, 1991), 5.


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