# Holy Quran; the Ultimate Source of Knowledge Management a Comparison Between KM Functional Model and IKM Functional Model

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**Abstract:** It is first and foremost belief of Muslims around the globe that Holy Quran is the ultimate source of knowledge of any type. Allah (SWT) said again and again in the Holy Quran that "there is nothing in the world which I have not stated/discussed in this great book" (34:3). So it can be stated that Holy Quran is the ultimate source of Knowledge. This paper aims to analyze how knowledge is managed according to the epistemology of Holy Quran. Management researchers and practitioners have devised and applied several models of knowledge management. In the current study two highly discussed and practiced models will be compared. Knowledge Management (KM) Functional Model states that the basic source of knowledge is "Man" while at the other end; Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM) Functional Model states that the basic source of knowledge is "Allah (SWT)". Keeping in view the available literature and currently practicing models, a thorough literature review is being carried on and ultimately the two models, KM Functional Model and IKM Functional Model, are being compared. This comparison will be made by keeping in view the teachings of Holy Quran and Ahadith of Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Likewise, while focusing on Knowledge Management (KM) conceptualization, this paper emphasizes on how IKM approaches add value to KM modeling and practices.

**Key words:** Knowledge Management · Islamic Knowledge Management · Holy Quran · Functional Model

## INTRODUCTION

Basic emphasis of the current study is to focus on the wider and broader vision of the source of knowledge. It elaborates what is knowledge, sources of knowledge, Holy Quran as the ultimate source of Knowledge Management and role of information technology for better understanding of Holy Qur'an. Difference between knowledge and ignorance is also another focus of the study. One can't say ignorance as a lack of knowledge. A person apparently having a high level of knowledge may also be ignorant as ignorance logically can be referred to failure in recognition of the Divine Truth, Creator and His creations [1]. Ultimately, it can be stated that the theme of human learning has a wide range starting from physical, social and behavioral sciences to the studies of spiritual and transcendental quests. According to Islamic preaching, there is no limit to seek knowledge and Islam considers the whole cosmos as the syllabi of human learning. And the only condition to knowledge, according to Islam, is the Divine Gnosis and closeness to Allah (SWT) which stems and must stem from all learning.

Holy Prophet is the fountainhead of all types of knowledge in the universe. As Holy Prophet said:

"I am the home of wisdom and Ali is its door" [2].

**Holy Qur'an Says:** "Nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in the Record Perspicuous" (Saba' 34:3)

Keeping in view the above said Hadis and verse from Holy Qur'an, we can say that Holy Prophet, His Seerah and the Holy Qur'an, is the fountainhead of knowledge. Holy Qur'an is also known as the book of wisdom. As Allah (SWT) also said in Holy Qur'an:

Alif. Lam. Ra. These are the verses of the Book of the wisdom (Younus 10:1).

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Traditional thinking leads us to understand the various sources of knowledge. But the most important, authentic and ultimate source of knowledge is Holy Qur'an. If we talk about the scope of knowledge, it is infinite. As we all know that there is no end to the Lordship of Allah (SWT) and Massengership of Holy Prophet (PBUH), knowledge is also endless. Entire creation of Allah (SWT) is enveloped by the knowledge. Farooqui (2005), states that knowledge is not purpose-free. Imam Ghazali says:

"And there is a station ahead of intellect, where the spiritual eye opens up. By means of this vision you can see the realities of the realm of unseen; the occurrences destined to happen in the time to come get discernible and other matters that fall off the jurisdiction of intellect come to light."

In coming lines, we will discuss about the different perspectives of knowledge (both traditional and Islamic), Knowledge Management and Islamic Knowledge Management. Our major focus will be on the elaboration of our research question that "ultimate source of knowledge is Holy Qur'an". For this elaboration, two models have been compared i.e. Functional Model of K M and Functional Model of IKM.

**Literature Review**
**Definition:** If we see the morphology of Arabic word Ilm (علم), it is composed of ain (ع), lam (ل) and mim (م) which means to seek, to know (Asfahani). Goldman (2006) [3] stated that knowledge is known as clear and coherent information achieved through the logical process. Goldman (2006) [3] further stated that this logical process is applied to the real life situations and problems for the evaluation of one's perception about his/her conclusion about the world. On the other hand, Nonaka (2009) [4] made dual classifications of knowledge including tacit and explicit. Knowledge brings humbleness and modesty in human beings. Aalusi in his book *Ruh-ul-Ma'ani* stated that Hazrat Aubakar Siddiq defined knowledge in the following words:

"Feeling conscious of being unable to know is called knowledge".

Raghib al-Asfahani, in his book *Mufradat alfaz- il-Quran* said:

"Knowledge is the awareness of a thing with reference to its reality".

Now let us have a look on the concept of knowledge keeping in view the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq of the Holy Qur'an. Allah Almighty addressed His Most Praised of men Muhammad (PBUH) in the following divine words through revelation.

"(O Beloved!) Read (commencing) with the name of Allah (SWT) Who has created (everything); He created man from a mass suspended like a leech (in the mother's womb). Read and Your Lord is Most Generous; He Who taught man (reading and writing) by the pen. He Who (besides that) taught man (all that) which he did not know". (Al-Alaq, 96:1-5).

These five verses of Holy Qur'an are very clearly stating the basic concept, ideology and benefits of the knowledge and its outcomes. Ultimately it can be stated that knowledge is an expedition from darkness to light and awareness. For further exploration of the concept of knowledge, let us have a look on the four basic elements of knowledge derived from the definition of knowledge provided by Qadri in his book Islamic Concept of Knowledge.

**Elements of Knowledge**
*Observer*: A person who is all the time looking to seek something or to know something, simply a student.

*Object*: It is a thing that is going to be explored, or for which a student is looking for. It can be an abstract or concrete. The entire universe comes under the canopy of object.

*Observing Capability*: This is the third element of knowledge. It is related to the receptiveness and latent of an observer/student to know and learn something.

*Objectivity*: It indicates purpose-oriented expedition to recognize and identify the object.

We must take into account that Islam does not only emphasize on the religious knowledge but it necessitates that human should go for every type of knowledge. The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly recommended conquering the universe which is impossible without gaining expertise in modern sciences. But the significant point to make here is that only that knowledge of modern sciences merits brilliance that seeks the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

**What Is Ignorance?:** At this stage, question arises that what is ignorance. Is it knowing nothing or something else? As we have discussed that only that knowledge is valuable and worthwhile which leads us to the recognition of Allah (SWT). So, the knowledge that glides us away from Allah (SWT) and fails to become a means of nearness to Allah Almighty is not said to be knowledge but can be referred to as ignorance (Qadri). As Holy Qur'an says:

"Say: Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?" (Az-Zumar 39:9).

**Knowledge Management (KM):** A question arises here, what is knowledge management? Before addressing this question, we must distinguish between raw information and knowledge. Raw information is known as generally existing in users' hand, but there are very few users who are able to switch this raw information into appropriate knowledge and later on application of this knowledge to accomplish their endeavors objectively. The processes by which they switch raw information to knowledge are known as KM strategies [5]. Claire (2002) defined KM as "the set of professional practices which improves the capabilities of the organization's human resources and enhances their ability to share what they know". KM, considering it as a natural event, is not known to be a new concern in human history and practices. Accordingly, there exist a range of jargons and terminologies for it, in a row from the wide course of locating, organizing and transferring, up to the usage of information sharing and networking. For the sake of conceptualization, KM is having some sort of similarity to "information management formulation" where the conception of methodical approach of collecting, documenting and distributing knowledge (whether explicit or tacit) are included. Osman Bakar (2008) [6] stated that "knowledge disorganized is life disorganized" which leads to the basic ideology of KM. Keeping in view the above said statement, KM is not a new idea. It is known as a pertinent mean in a long strategy toward progress, evolution and success.

**KM's Component:** KM as defined by Claire (2002) is an existing and ongoing process. Keeping in view the exception of volume and structure, as discussed by Yaakub (2011) [1] KM has three components also known as pillars: a) Knowledge in itself which is expanded during searching and exploration; b) Methods in which knowledge can be effortlessly used, dispensed and distributed; and c) Valuable users of knowledge as driving forces of change which leads to evolution and accomplishment. Keeping in view the pillars of KM, one can't neglect the construct of KM in day to day lives as KM is very much important for the success of everyone. Another important aspect of KM is its ability to help in evaluation of past of a person and comparison with the present and ultimately setting goals for the future as well [4].

**KM's Functional Criteria:** In society, principally, people are becoming aware of the functional criteria of KM and the concept is gaining grounds for the practical implications [1]. As functionality of KM can lead to the achievement, stability and maturity in society, KM has a specific role in both spatial modeling of life and stochastic reservoir modeling of human life activities.

Interestingly, spatial modeling of life and stochastic reservoir modeling of human life go ahead of the concern for the single data type and incorporate plentiful sections of multi-disciplinary data each having their own intricacy and most of the time only discipline specialists can fully understand it. In fact the major function of any KM system is the provision of prime and basic repository for the documentation and application of any type of information [7].

There exist several models of KM including Von Krogh and Roos model [4], Nonaka - Takeuchi model [8], Choo model [9], Wiig model [10], Boisot model [11] and many more. That's why; there are many ways of observing the functions of KM. However, there exist three significant restricted functions for constructing any type of KM model; which include:

- Identifying the body of knowledge, its different classifications and categories – first of all knowledge should be explored and then developed.
- Simplifying the knowledge description and its application – its meaningless to collect information without defining the proper methodology which can help in having complete understanding and easy and proper application in real life
- Deployment and impact of knowledge resources - for the success of any product/service, user satisfaction is very much important. So the success can be achieved by satisfying user needs.

In other words, these basic functions of KM are stating that KM is really able to augment knowledge and also propagate it among different users, which will lead them to become victorious people. As discussed earlier, there exist several models of KM functional criteria; the model of conditional function for KM developed by Yaakub (2011) [1] can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1 above depicts the application of operational functions of KM which help users to attain their developmental goals in the productivities of their life. It's a clear that BK is not simply a collection of words and terminologies but it works as a true repository for the
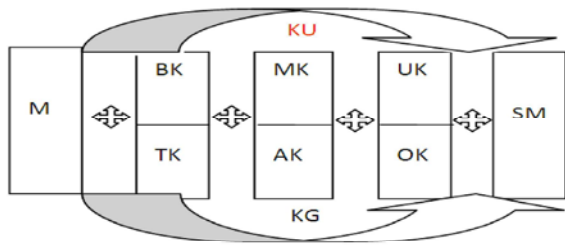
Fig. 1: Functional Model of KM

Source: Yaakub, (2011) [1]

(M=Man; BK=Body Knowledge; TK=Type of Knowledge; MK=Methodology of Knowledge; AK=Application of Knowledge; UK=Users of Knowledge; OK=Output of Knowledge; KG=Knowledge Growth; KU=Understanding of Knowledge; SM=Successful Manager)

knowledge which later on helps in attaining success for people. In Figure 1 each of the elements symbolizes a sub-process of KM practices which is shown by the arrows with four-headed and that takes place when two (or more individuals) exchange their knowledge and the purpose of this exchange of knowledge is to be closer to each other in order to ascribe their success. In other words, this model states that KM can be used as a mean to hoard, retrieve, propagate and manage information related to the needs of the users. As Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) [8] discussed that first and foremost key factor of success for any organization is to accumulate plenty of knowledge, particularly in BK and TK. In the second phase, tacit knowledge should be transformed into explicit knowledge so that knowledge becomes functional (OK) and useable (UK) within managerial bustles.

According to the KM functional model showed in figure 1, output of knowledge understanding (KU) and knowledge growth (KG) is success for any human action (SM). However, as a human, he/she might be controlled by a definite situation and limit him/her to maneuver either (BK) or (MK) or even (UK) in some cases for the sake of success.

**Islamic Conceptualization of Knowledge Management:**
Reason for the evaluation and description of IKM is to facilitate UK to understand different components of IKM. IKM practices includes different elements and specification in transforming UK to become a successful person in incorporating all type of knowledge within his/her operational activities. In this way, as a first step,

UK has to comprehend the nature of knowledge and its continuation toward observing the possibility of IKM functional behavior and identifying its different elements before reaching any concrete finding through comparative analysis between KM and IKM.

*Islam* which is a "manner of submission" to Allah (*s.w.t*) is a constructive reference point to commence the debate on the Islamic conceptualization of KM. It is pertinent to keep in mind that the Islamic view of KM is associated and continuous with its concept of *'ilm* (knowledge). We have discussed basic idea of Knowledge previously both in conventional and Islamic perspectives, which shows that the definition of knowledge is not limited to only epistemological issues but also comprised of ethical truthfulness and other aspects of knowledge objectivities as well.

According to Islamic preaching, knowledge is a God-gifted bounty (*'ata*) to Humanity. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to a high degree". (Al-Mujadila, 58:11).

Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w*) also persuaded the attainment of knowledge by saying:

"*Verily, the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets*" [12].

Farooqui, (2005) is of the view that value of man is infact the value of his knowledge.

Therefore, knowledge is not just a particular cultural production, but also has much more value according to sayings of the Holy Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad. According to the Holy Qur'an (96:1-5) [13], human beings are inculcated to read, however, this reading should be done in the Name of Almighty Allah (SWT) who has taught the man by the Pen and has taught Man which he knew not. The inculcation here is not just to gather knowledge and information, but also guide man to plan, organize and manage.

This is the basic belief of Muslims that knowledge starts off from Allah (SWT) and later on it is transferred to man through different ways such as revelation, sense perception, reasoning and feelings. Other way round, we can say that knowledge is an accessible and observable fact that Man has to search out and then acquire it. This whole process of searching, acquiring and investigating reflects the nature of "Knowledge Growth" (KG) within an individual and the existence of human societies and/or civilization [1].
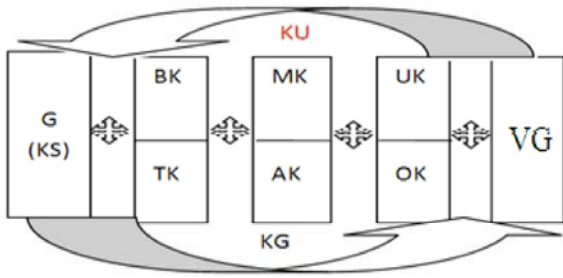
Fig. 2: Functional Model of IKM
Source: [1]
(G=God; KS=Knowledge Source; BK=Body Knowledge; TK=Types of Knowledge; MK=Methodology of Knowledge; AK=Application of Knowledge; UK=Users of Knowledge; OK=Output of Knowledge; KG=Knowledge Growth; KU=Knowledge Understanding; VG=Vicegerent of God)

Allah Almighty created all types of knowledge for mankind and being vicegerents of Allah (SWT), its obligatory for mankind to investigate knowledge and develop its practical application (Al-Imran 2:29-33). Above discussion, i can serve as a first step for the construction of a structure for an IKM Theory. IKM theory is of the view that Muslims should pursue and cultivate different branches of knowledge so that a suitable model of KM can be constructed which can help mankind in having spiritual strength and improving mental ability.

**IKM's Functional Criteria:** As discussed earlier, KM comprises of three major elements: Body of Knowledge (BK), Methodology of Knowledge (MK) and Users of Knowledge (UK) IKM has one more aspect known as the Source of Knowledge (KS). Keeping in view the current scenario, knowledge can be deemed as co-existing with Mankind. That's why, its duty of mankind to explore and expand that knowledge as per their needs and urgencies. This approach is meant as an uncomplicated mode of looking into KS which is highlighted through explanation based on the specialization of a specialist or communal constructive finding which is acknowledged as *Ijtihad*. The output of this procedure should be such an important and persuasive so that it should appeal to the rational mind that inescapably appreciates their value to practically apply them to augment the effectiveness of productivities and achievements. Different elements of IKM and their functional criteria discussed above can be illustrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2 above portrays the practical application of IKM and its operational functions which help users in achieving the sensation as Vicegerents of Almighty Allah (VG). So the hypothesis here is, when human beings are proficient to manage knowledge for themselves as structured by IKM, they will be able to identify the greatness of Allah Almighty, the Creator of the universe [14]. Keeping in view the above discussion, some holistic doctrines of Islamic Knowledge Management application can be cataloged here:

- Conceptualization of IKM is an effort toward the realization of knowledge from an Islamic viewpoint.
- Users of IKM have a positive viewpoint upon the existence of knowledge and its boundaries. As a result, they deal with knowledge as an ingredient of their life activities and customs.
- Users of IKM should not opt for knowing a little or a lot. They must be able to focus mostly on what they need to know and when it is needed to recognize. That's why, Holy Qur'an has also been revealed gradually and in a range of stages.

The major focus of the utilization of IKM is upon the welfare, realism and usefulness of the users, particularly parallel to the needs of human. Human beings are forgetful and careless and being vicegerents of Almighty, its fundamental duty of human beings to continuously explore, identify and develop up-to-date knowledge and this is the basic idea of IKM [15-18].

**Comparative Analysis:** As this is the first and foremost belief of all Muslims that Allah (SWT) is the ultimate source of any type of knowledge and it is stated several times in the Holy Qur'an. In current study, we have to debate on this issue by keeping in view the two models of KM i.e. Functional Model of KM (Model 1) and Functional Model of IKM (Model 2) [19-25].

In model 1 the arrows go from Man (M) to Successful Manager (SM) and these arrows incorporate the whole theory of Km comprised of BK, TK, MK, AK, UK and OK. Which states that source of knowledge is Man. While in model 2 arrows are showing a continuous process, which is between G (Source of Knowledge) to VG (Vicegerent of God) and this process incorporate the whole theory of KM comprised of BK, TK, MK, AK, UK and OK. In model 2, it is shown that Allah (SWT) is the main source of knowledge. So ultimately we can say that the difference between both the models is Source of Knowledge. As Qur'an says:

"Nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in the Record Perspicuous" (Saba' 34:3).

The Holy Qur'an is the fountainhead of entire learning. But there is a remarkable variation between the Holy Qur'an and other books. The Qur'an is the word of Allah (SWT) and other books on different areas of knowledge are human studies of Allah's creation. These books only deal with specific subjects and topics. A book on one discipline is silent on other disciplines. They are no way equivalent to the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an is a treasure of all knowledge and learning that man may need till the end of time. The sciences and technologies are human ventures in the line of guidance Allah (SWT) has revealed in the Qur'an. They are parts of an infinite whole enclosed in the Qur'an. All knowledge starts off from the Holy Qur'an and this is the basic truth of the Islamic doctrine of knowledge and its source.

So being a Muslim we have a firm belief in the teachings of Holy Qur'an and Qur'an is a revelation of Allah (SWT) to His final Messenger Muhammad. So, one can't deny from the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an. Finally we can say that Holy Qur'an is the ultimate source of knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to investigate the concept of Knowledge Management as a first step to found the conceptualization of IKM. In addition, we have also observed that the application of KM strategies begins with users and also ends with users (internal or external), i.e. its functional modeling is taking more user-oriented based behaviors in many multi-disciplinary management efforts. IKM, on the other hand, starts with knowledge recourses for the purpose of user development and then ends up with the source of knowledge as user evaluation and confirmation in exploring useful usage and application, i.e. its functional modeling is an addition towards recourse-oriented based behaviors where all knowledge understanding (KU) and output (OK) should be a reflection of knowledge source (KS) representation. Finally, it is apparent that there is requirement of appropriate tools for the knowledge management. Function and objectives are different and specific for each and every tool. That's why; IKM is very essential for a Muslim manager in attaining his managerial functions, growth and efficiency. Because IKM shows that ultimate source of knowledge is Allah (SWT).

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