Action-Oriented Research in Education: A Comparative Study on A Western and An Islamic View

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Abstract

Comparative studies among cultures, particularly Western and Eastern ones, are vital and necessary. In this essay, we are presenting a comparison between Western and Islamic views. The focus of this study is on action-oriented educational research based on Charles Clark's view as a more recent action-oriented view on educational research. The comparison between Clark's view and the one we suggest that is inspired by the Islamic view of human action and shows that there are considerable commonalities between the two views as both of them avoid the mechanistic orientation and take human action into account. There are also differences between the two views regarding the distinction between fact and value, as well as the relation between means and ends in research.

Preliminaries on Intercultural Understanding[1]

According to a line of argument, the relation between different cultures, including Western and Eastern ones, is incomparable. Thomas Kuhn introduced the notion of incommensurability in the relation between scientific

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paradigms. However, at a deeper level, he considers the difference between paradigms as the difference between "incompatible modes of community life": "Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life."[2] As D. C. Phillips has mentioned, Kuhn's notion of "incompatible modes of community life" is similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein's "forms of life," which along with the language games that belong to every form of lifes are like paradigms.[3] The particular scholar who was inspired by the Wittgensteinian idea of incommensurable forms of life and used it in relation to cultures was Peter Winch.[4] He considered cultures as different forms of life so that one cannot judge about a culture in terms of another culture's nature. Take the example that Winch puts fourth: "A psychoanalyst who wished to give an account of the aetiology of neuroses amongst, say, the Trobriand Islanders, could not just apply without further reflection of the concepts developed by Freud for situations arising in our own society. He would have first to investigate such things as the idea of fatherhood amongst the islanders and take into account any relevant aspects in which their idea differed from that current in his own society."[5] Thus, according to Winch, one should not ignore the internal criteria of a culture, and in case of using external criteria, these criteria should be modified in terms of the internal ones: "Similarly, although the reflective student of society, or of a particular mode of social life, may find it necessary to use concepts which are not taken from the forms of activity which he is investigating, but which are taken rather from the context of his own investigation, still these technical concepts of his will imply a previous understanding of those other concepts which belong to the activities under investigation."[6]

The view that considers an incommensurable relationship between cultures negates the possibility of understanding a culture from the outside. Understanding, accordingly, is possible only in terms of the internal criteria of a culture. However, as Donald Davidson has shown, incommensurability itself requires a certain degree of mutual understanding. In other words, difference presupposes a kind of connection and continuation: "The dominant metaphor of conceptual relativism, that of differing points of view, seems to betray an underlying paradox. Different points of view make sense, but only if there is a common coordinate system on which to plot them; yet the existence of a common system belies the claim of dramatic incomparability."[7]

Davidson further maintains that it is not possible to have paradigms that are not translatable into each other. Davidson announces that believing

in a "conceptual scheme" is a third dogma of empiricism. This indicates that there cannot be paradigms and, a fortiori, one cannot talk about relativism in terms of conceptual schemes. Arguing that there are no radically different minds since we think with language and there cannot be a radically different language, Davidson concludes that the so-called different paradigms are translatable into each other. Referring to Kuhn, Davidson states:

> Kuhn, on the other hand, wants us to think of different observers of the same world who come to it with incommensurable systems of concepts. . . . Instead of living in different worlds, Kuhn's scientists may, like those who need Webster's dictionary, be only words apart. . . . 'Incommensurable' is, of course, Kuhn and Feyerabend's word for 'not intertranslatable.' The neutral content waiting to be organized is supplied by nature.[8]

Having considered the inevitable common background, we can go a step forward by what Charles Taylor suggests.[9] Supporting multiculturalism, he argues for a dialogical identity for humans. An important part of this argument is that identity is partly shaped by the recognition of the person by others. Recognition itself refers to the differences of individuals and groups. Thus, the notion of dialogical identity is that the identity of a person or a group is not only related to a common core or unity, but also is dependent on the recognition of differences.

Noticing that a difference is a two-way road, we will have a new picture of identity. This view not only modifies the other person's previous conception in my mind, but also modifies my previous conception of myself. Thus, Taylor says: "All human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings."[10] Relying on George Gadamer's "fusion of horizons,"[11] Taylor maintains that understanding a different culture requires that we partly leave our previous horizon and learn something new from that culture which, in turn, will lead us to a new horizon due to the fusion of the two cultures.

What we are suggesting is that comparative studies among cultures are a necessity for the humankind. In this background, comparative studies between the Western and Eastern cultures can be informative for both cultures. This comparison is interesting in all aspects, and particularity in the types of inquiry developed in these cultures in the end. Two kinds of inquiry developed within the long-standing traditions of these cultures. These two kinds of investigation could be termed as "problem-based" and "mystery-based" inquiries – the former belonging to the Western culture and the latter to the Eastern. The recent Western civilization has mostly

considered that the life, as it were, is the locus of problems that should be settled by means of science. Referring to this kind of problem-based view in both science and life, Karl Popper states that "The work of the scientist does not start with the collection of data, but with the sensitive selection of a promising problem – a problem that is significant within the current problem situation, which in its turn is entirely dominated by our theories. . . . Scientific problems are preceded of course, by pre-scientific problems, and especially by practical problems."[12]

Popper even broadens this problem-based view from science to philosophy and, in fact, every rational theory: "Every rational theory, no matter whether scientific or philosophical, is rational in so far as it tries to solve certain problems. A theory is comprehensible and reasonable only in its relation to a given problem-situation, and it can be rationally discussed only by discussing this relation."[13]

Accordingly, a problem-based inquiry will result as urgently needed for dealing with life problems. This trend has led to experimental inquiry with an emphasis on interference – as first suggested by Francis Bacon in his *New Organon*[14]: that the scientist should interrogate the nature. In other words, nature does not speak in the first place; it should be tortured in order to speak.

On the other hand, the Eastern culture has dealt mainly with mystery, rather than problem, and provided a kind of mystery-based inquiry. As Popper stated, life might be full of problems, but the life itself is a mystery, rather than a problem, and hence we should understand its meaning instead of merely solving the related problems. In fact, when we see the life as a mystery, some of its so-called problems dissolve. There are differences between the two types of inquiry that deserve an independent study. It suffices here to hint of some of them. In the mystery type of inquiry, one should emphasize on inner experience, whereas in the problem-based inquiry, experiment is at the center – and while in the former, acceptance is at stake, interference takes the central position in the latter. In summary, while waiting and listening to nature is a pivotal point in the former, action and forcing the nature to speak is desirable in the latter.

In a Taylorian view, these two kinds of inquiry need to recognize each other in order to establish their identities, or to put in Gadamer's terms, a "fusion of horizons" is in order for each of the two traditions of inquiry to meet each other.[15] The problem-based inquiry without his mystery-based sister will lead, at best, to perplexity and, at worst, to the destruction of nature and humankind. On the other hand, mystery-based inquiry without her problem-based brother will lead to a mere heavenly life and neglecting the fact that we are on the earth.

In line of this necessity of comparison, we will deal with a case of comparison between the Western and Islamic views. The focus of this study will be on action-oriented educational research. From the turn of the twentieth century, parallel to the dominance of behaviorism, educational research was mainly behavior-oriented. Behaviorism was a paradigm case of problem-based inquiry on the ground that its strategy was to discover the outer causes of behavior. However, from the mid-century on, a new tendency appeared toward action and action-oriented educational research among Western thinkers. To see human behavior as action provides a space for noticing inner experience, while dealing with it simply as behavior invites us to do mere outer experiments in terms of causes and effects. The recent trend toward action has provided close relationships for comparison between the Western and Eastern traditions because action, understood in terms of inner experiences, has a long tradition in the East. In what follows, we will first explain a more recent Western view on action-oriented educational research. Then, we will suggest an Islamic view on human action and a related action-oriented educational research strategy. At the end of this essay, there will be comparisons between the two views.

Action-Oriented Educational Research in the Western Context

As was hinted above, a behaviorist account has been dominant in the educational research since the turn of the twentieth century in the West. This kind of account has still its impact on educational research even though no longer as the dominant style. A more recent case of this impact can be seen in the research program called "School Effectiveness Research" (SER) which was discussed in England during the nineties. In this research program led by people like P. Sammons and H. Goldstein, positivistic presuppositions in ontology and epistemology were adopted. That is why Sammons appealed predominantly to phrases like "causal connections" and "causal determinants of educational achievement."[16] Even though some of the supporters of this research program[17] maintained that both the quantitative and qualitative methods should be used as complementary in educational research, this trend is criticized as a "logical salad," in which concepts like "cause" and "explanation" are combined with concepts like "reason" and "understanding" as they were used by Edmund Husserl and Max Weber.[18]

Unlike the continuation of mechanistic views in educational research, some have turned from behaviorism to an action orientation, in which inner experiences are taken into account. To mention but a few cases, we can refer to David Carr in relating practical inquiry and values in the realm

of educational theory,[19] Nel Noddings in regarding education as having a moral and spiritual potential,[20] Wilfred Carr in considering educational inquiry as a critical view on action,[21] Richard Pring in dealing with teaching as a moral practice, [22] and Joseph Dunne in connecting learning with virtue in the Aristotelian tradition of *phronesis* (practical wisdom).[23]

We will focus here on Charles Clark's work as a more recent action-oriented view on educational research. He is to some extent in agreement with the supporters of *phronesis* – in so far as they consider education in terms of action rather than mechanical behavior. However, he criticizes them in two areas. First, he accuses them of conflating education with morality in considering education far from being instrumentalist – whereas he thinks that there are some instrumentalist aspects in education like teaching that provide students with increased knowledge. Secondly, he accuses them of combining first-order and second-order activities in dealing with teaching as action and reflection on action at the same time – whereas, according to him, teaching is action-involving research and hypothesis testing and is a first-order activity, while reflection on action is a second-order activity and reflection on action is dependent action-involving research and hypothesis testing. That is to say, when the research provided some results, we can contemplate on our actions according to them.

Now, let us look at Clark's own strategy in dealing with educational research. First, he distinguishes education from technique, science, and art: "Teaching is neither a skill, a craft, as set of techniques, a kind of expertise nor an art. Each of these involves manipulation of causal means to ends, technical in the first four, aesthetic in the last."[24] In this respect, he divides action-oriented research into two kinds: one, in which causal relations of means and ends are involved, is the one he rejects – and the other, which he supports, involves a final aspect or a logical relation between ends and means. In what follows, we explain his view in more detail.

Clark tries not only to separate educational research from a mere causal application of say social science findings, but also to sort out educational research from the so-called social sciences. What lies at the bottom of Clark's attempt is a distinction between fact and value. According to him, social sciences deal with social facts, while education deals with values and desirable actions. Again, while facts are aspects of the world, desirable actions are not so: "Education, then, is not an 'aspect of the world' about which a 'body of knowledge' needs to be accumulated by 'scientific enquiry', prior to the consideration of any 'application'. . . ."[25] That is why a progressive does not consider what is going on in a traditional school as education, and this is exactly the goal the traditionalist shows regarding a progressive school.

Clark concludes firstly that the division of educational research into theoretical and applied is not tenable because all educational research is applied in the sense of dealing with providing desirable actions or actions with a particular description. Secondly, given that education is an "intentional" activity and primarily deals with values, what should be involved in educational research is to infer the implications of the preferred descriptions of subject matters for teaching and educational activities. For instance, teaching mathematics, sciences, and morality is dependent on the descriptions a teacher might have of these disciplines. This refers to the intentionality involved in education. Any kind of description of these subject matters will have logical implications for teaching methods different from the implications due to other descriptions. If, for instance, a teacher has an analytic view on mathematics, she or he cannot appeal to teaching methods regardless of logical relations the presupposed conceptions about the nature of mathematics have. This is what exactly the educational research should do for providing desirable actions in educational settings.

This strategy allows educational research to become a philosophical investigation of values. When the preferred philosophical descriptions of the nature of mathematics, science, morality. and so on are decided, a philosophical investigation needs to be conducted to the effect that what are the implications of those descriptions for teaching and other educational activities. This investigation will have the form of a practical syllogism different from theoretical syllogism. This is due to the essential character of education consisting of practical first-order activities that are different from theoretical first-order activities, which are at stake in theoretical sciences. An example given by Clark for practical syllogism is: "It is good (e.g., fulfilling) to learn X maths etc./This is some X maths etc./Therefore learn this."[26]

The difference between the practical and theoretical syllogism is that while in the latter, the minor premise affirms (or negates) the major premise – in the former, this is not the case. In the practical syllogism, the conclusion is a practical recommendation, which can be concluded after deciding about the major premise that is a value judgment. Given that the conclusion in this kind of syllogism is always a recommendation, Clark says that dividing educational research to basic and applied is not tenable because all educational conclusions will be of a practical kind.

Islamic View on Human Action

Rom Haré pointed out appropriately that the Islamic concept of action has an important role to play in the realm of ethics and morality. He states that

while the morality has been predominantly "cognitive" in the West, it has been predominantly practical in the Islamic view. He uses the phrase of "morality of action" to describe the Islamic morality.[27]

In this section, we will try to give an account of the Islamic view on action and analyze this concept to find out its dimensions or foundations according to the Islamic scriptures. Then, in the next section, we will use this concept of action to present its implications for educational research.

The Human as an Agent

In the first sight, it is interesting to note that action is taken so wide in the Islamic view that it could cover all the humans whether believers or non-believers in God. That is to say, all humans are agents and they are responsible for their actions.

The human's being or personality, referred to in the Qur'ān as the "soul," and it is a field in which different elements and factors are involved from inside or outside. Muslim scholars have vastly investigated an human soul in terms of the elements mentioned about it in the Qur'ān. It is agreed upon among the scholars that the Qur'ān has mentioned at least three features for the soul: the one that urges evil (*nafs al-ammārat bi al-sū'*), the one that blames (*nafs al-lawwāmah*), and the third one that is at peace (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*). To give an example of these scholars, we will give a brief account of al-Ghazālī's view on the soul.

Al-Ghazālī gives two meanings to the soul: one referring to a place for desire and anger – that is, almost a negative feature for the soul. The soul in this sense is associated with *nafs al-ammarah*. The second meaning refers to the other two features. In terms of *nafs al-lawwāmah*, the human is in a state of struggling for the good and, thus, blames itself for neglecting and breaching the moral rules. As for the third feature, it shows the relationship between the human and God in terms of which the human can obtain rest and peace.[28]

Sometimes al-Ghazālī talks about the soul in terms of two parts, animal and spiritual:

> Man has two souls, an animal soul and a spiritual soul, which latter is of angelic nature. The scat of the animal soul is the heart, from which this soul issues like a subtle vapour and pervades all the members of the body, giving the power of sight to the eye, the power of hearing to the ear, and to every member the faculty of performing its own appropriate functions. It may be compared to a lamp carried about within a cottage, the light of which falls upon the walls wherever it goes. The heart is the wick of this lamp, and when the supply of oil is cut off for any

> reason, the lamp dies. Such is the death of the animal soul. With the spiritual, or human soul, the case is different. It is indivisible, and by it man knows God. It is, so to speak, the rider of the animal soul, and when that perishes it still remains, but is like a horseman who has been dismounted, or like a hunter who has lost his weapons.[29]

In other places, al-Ghazālī gives a tripartite picture of the soul – including a natural spirit, an animal spirit, and a human part. The natural part is concerned with eating and drinking; the animal part with lust and anger, as well as feeling and movement; and finally, the human part is concerned with knowledge and rules the other two spirits.[30]

To give a comprehensive account of the elements or factors of human personality according to the Qur'ān, the following list needs to be taken into account:

1. A divine element; is an innate acquaintance with God along with an innate inclination toward Him. This is called "*fiṭrah*" in the Qur'ān.[31]
2. Sensuality; is a strong inclination toward what supply the initial or instinctual needs. This inclination could be so strong that it breaches the moral boundaries. The soul is called in this state "*ammārah*."[32]
3. Wisdom; is an element for recognizing right/wrong and good/bad and seeking a way toward rightness and goodness. This is the reason or wisdom, which is called "*aql'* in the Qur'ān and is actually used as a verb, though there are nouns as synonyms for it like "*ḥijr*."[33]
4. Conscience; is an element for criticizing and blaming oneself in case of breaching moral boundaries. The soul is called here "*lawwāmah*" (self-blaming).[34]
5. The will is an element for accomplishment. This is the will, which is called in the Qur'ān "*irādah*" and is used as verb.[35]
6. Social factors, which are influential social factors (family, culture, political powers, economy, etc.) providing the background for the development of the social aspect of the human identity. These relationships between the individual and social factors are discussed in different places in the Qur'ān. The term of the "community's book" (*kitābul ummah*) is used to refer to these kinds of relationships that shape the social aspect of human identity[36]
7. Limitations; finally, there are limits or weaknesses involved in the humans. These might be potential or factual, as they might be due to hereditary situations or social conditions. These kinds of limitations are referred to in different places in the Qur'ān.[37]

As the above-mentioned points show, the field of human soul is full of different contrastive elements or factors. Now, the question is: as far as the human nature is concerned, what could be the product of these complexities? In other words, what is the final picture of the human beyond these interactions?

The answer is this: in the final analysis, the product of these interactions is the human action – the action that could be attributed to him or her: "And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen. Then, shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward."[38]

This is not, of course, to say that all the humans are responsible for their actions in the same way – rather, given that different people have different capacities and limitations, each person will be responsible for his or her actions, parallel to their relevant capacities and limitations: "Allah does not lay on anyone a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it."[39] Nevertheless, the final thing that should not be forgotten is that all the humans are sources of their actions and that they are responsible for their actions.

We can conclude that the Qur'ān sees the human as an agent who could be regarded as the main origin of his or her actions – these are the actions that constitute his or her identity. To see the human as an agent and actor provides a comprehensive view of the human, which goes beyond the small classifications of people in terms of their gender or race and even in terms of their beliefs, like believers and non-believers in God. In other words, the highest horizon from which the Qur'ān invites us to look at the human is that the human is an agent and actor. Men or women, white or black, believers or non-believers in God, all are the agents that are in the process of shaping their identities by their actions. Even though their actions are of different kinds, they are all the source of their actions.

Thus, in a general address to the humans, it is stated: "Your striving is most surely (directed to) various (ends). Then as for him who gives away and guards (against evil), And accepts the best, We will facilitate for him the easy end. And as for him who is niggardly and considers himself free from need (of Allah), and rejects the best, we will facilitate for him the difficult end."[40]

As it is clear, in the first verse of the above quotation, all the humans are considered as agents who are looking for some ends, even though their strivings are not in the same directions. Thus, at the highest level, the human is regarded as the actor. At a lower level, given the different kinds of actions, a grand dual classification is accomplished: the action that leads to

relief, and the action leading to difficulty. What is mainly of concern here is the most general view on the humans – namely, viewing them as actors.

Foundations of Human Action

The question that concerns us here is: what is an action? Action is different from behavior in that action requires that there be some foundations for the outer behavior. Thus, all actions are behaviors but not vice versa. In other words, all actions have behavioral manifestations, but it is not the case that all behavioral manifestations can be considered as actions. Now, the important question is this: what foundations are needed to turn a behavior into an action?

Western philosophers addressed this question vastly in different ways. To mention just a few, we will refer to Wittgenstein, Winch, and Davidson. For Wittgenstein, what he calls "rule-following" is so vital in accounting for human action. What turns human bodily movements to actions is "rule-following," which implies a social agreement among the members of a society. This requires one make a clear-cut distinction between "law" and "rule" – the former being causal and suited to natural sciences, while the latter being conceptual and meaningful suited to human social studies. Thus, human action should be considered as rule-generated rather than law-governed. Wittgenstein states: "no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule."[41]

Elaborating Wittgenstein's view, Winch also holds "rule-following" as an important criterion in accounting for human action. Thus, according to Winch, one can study an action only in terms of its "intrinsic" conceptual space or logical connections involved in it: "An event's character as an act of obedience is intrinsic to it in a way which is not true of an event's character as a clap of thunder; and this is in general true of human acts as opposed to natural events. In the case of the latter, although human beings can think of the occurrences in question only in terms of the concepts they do in fact have of them, yet the events themselves have an existence independent of those concepts."[42] This indicates that in studying social behavior of people, one should aim at the point or meaning of what is being said or done.

It is interesting to note that Davidson's theory of action is known to defeat advocates of the so-called "logical connection argument." inspired by the later Wittgenstein and defended by Winch among others. This is because when Davidson talked about "reasons as causes." his view indicated that he wants to give a causal interpretation of rational rules, which

are referred to as reasons for actions.[43] Even though Davidson once held that reasons are causes, he later on elaborated his view and stated that reasons can only be causes as physical events, rather than as reasons. In other words, as far as the logical space of reasons is concerned, the relation between mental types is at issue, and this kind of relation cannot "have echo in physical theory"[44] namely in causal laws on the grounds that the latter involves in the relation between events rather than types. The result, as A. Saaristo holds, is that Davison's view on rationality cannot be understood in terms of causality.[45]

Having looked at some theories of action in the West, now we are looking for foundations of action as they are seen in the Qur'ān. In this regard, we find at least three kinds of foundations: cognition, inclination, and will. These three points will be explained briefly in what follows.

As for cognition, the human action is introduced in a way that we could infer its reliance on a cognitive foundation. This foundation can have different strengths in terms of imagination, guess, or certainty. To give an example, we refer to imagination. Some behaviors of people have been accounted for in the Qur'ān in terms of their underlying imaginations: "And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught. . . ."[46] In this verse, the behavior is called an action because of its underlying imagination. As the interesting analogy of a thirsty person in a desert shows, he strives toward a place in the desert because he imagines the mirage as water.

The second foundation of action is inclination. In this regard, people's behaviors are referred to in the Qur'ān in terms of their underlying inclinations or desires. With regard to this foundation, a behavior is an action on the ground that its meaning is related to its underlying inclinations. These inclinations could appear in positive or negative shapes, namely as attraction or escape: "And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance. Thus have We made fair seeming to every people their deeds. . . ."[47]

The point that all people find their deeds fair seeming indicates that one of the foundations of people's actions could be sought in their inclinations or in their being impressed by the attractiveness of what they do.

Finally, the third underlying foundation of human action is will. In some places of the Qur'ān, people's behaviors are explained in relation to their underlying wills: "And when a party of them said: O people of Yathrib! There is no place to stand for you (here), therefore go back; and a partyof them asked permission from the prophet, saying: Surely our houses are exposed; and they were not exposed; they only wanted to fly away."[48]

We can conclude from what has been said in this section that three kinds of foundations are considered in the Qur'ān for human action: cognition, inclination, and will. As far as cognition is concerned, human action involves a particular description and imagination of things that should not be necessarily as the things really are. As for inclination, action requires that the person find some of the cognitive descriptions desirable. Finally, a choice is involved in action that is due to the will as the third foundation of action. In terms of choice, action is a striving toward an aim.

A final point is that action can be personal as well as collective. A collective action is the outcome of a convergence among individuals in their cognitions, inclinations, and choices or wills. Once this kind of convergence is held, we can talk about the action of a group or a nation. Sometimes, an action is attributed to a group in the Qur'ān: "So, Allah's apostle said to them: (Leave alone) Allah's she-camel, and (give) her (to) drink. But they called him a liar and slaughtered her; therefore their Lord crushed them for their sin and leveled them (with) the ground."[49] The phrase of "their sin" refers to a collective action, where there was agreement among the individuals in cognition, inclination, and will.

When an action becomes collective, some new forms might appear. For instance, social norms refer to the cognitive aspects of a collective-desired action, and the social force that one encounters when one breaches the norms refers to the general will that supports the collective choice.

Educational Research Based on the Islamic Conception of Action

Islamic conception of action as a presupposition requires that all the so-called social sciences or humanities, including education, regard human behavior as action and perform their explanations with this regard. We use the term *humanities* here as including all the disciplines dealing with human actions, whether sociology and psychology or education. Given that actions are value-laden activities because of aims and norms involved in their performance, all branches of humanities will be dealing with values.

P. D. Hutcheon's view on values as "criteria for action" is worth noting here. Distinguishing values from related concepts such as norms and ideals, Hutcheon states:

> If we conclude that values are not the same as ideals, norms, desired objects or espoused beliefs about the "good" but are, instead, operating criteria for action, then we must agree that they are not amenable to direct observation and measurement. It follows that values can only be inferred from behavioral choices – not from what individuals say they believe, or ought to do, or desire as end states of existence.[50]

When, as Hutcheon claims, we consider values in terms of actions rather than needs, then it follows that value development in human life is not a process with identifiable end states. Instead, value development should be understood in terms of consequences of actions that people do while the actions themselves are under the influence of knowledge changes. Thus, according to Hutcheon, value changes are not always evolutionary, rather they might be revolutionary due to fundamental changes in knowledge: "Radical transformations of belief systems – and consequent fundamental changes in values – may occur following fundamental dislocations in the knowledge system."[51] Hutcheon's view indicates that how value and knowledge systems are interrelated.

Thus, a distinction between fact and value in the realm of the humanities will not be tenable, or we can say that all the facts of humanities are value-laden. As a philosopher of science, Larry Laudan[52] has used the phrase of *value-ladenness* with regard to natural sciences, and then a question might arise as to what is the difference between natural and social sciences. The answer is that while values are essential with regard to the facts of humanities, they are not so in the realm of natural sciences. What is value-laden in these sciences is the scientific endeavor, which refers to the action of the scientist. Atoms are not value-laden in themselves, even though the scientific endeavor of a physicist is value-laden in, for instance, taking aesthetic considerations like simplicity into account in theory building. However, on the other hand, an individual's action is value-laden in itself because of the aims and norms involved in it. No doubt, the endeavor of a psychologist who is trying to study this action is also value-laden as far as this endeavor is also an action in its turn as was the case in physics. Hence, we can paraphrase Anthony Giddens where he uses "double hermeneutic" to refer to the scientific activity of a sociologist given that the hermeneutic is also involved in his or her subject of study who is a person.[53] To paraphrase him, we can say that the endeavor of a scientist in humanities has double value-ladenness, given that his or her subject of study has value-laden actions.

When we turn to education and educational research among the humanities, the question will be this: is there any particular characteristic for educational activity and research in terms of value? It is worth noting that John Dewey brings his view on the involvement of fact and value to the realm of education. As a pragmatist, Dewey holds that fact and value should not be seen as distinct because all the factual knowledge of humans is at the service of goal-directed activities.[54] As Richard Rorty has emphasized, a pragmatist does not consider knowledge as representation of facts; rather what is important for a pragmatist is the function of knowledge in

terms of problem solving.[55] When it comes to education and educational research, Dewey holds that all that is taught in education should be viewed in terms of their function in preparing students for problem solving because the value of knowledge is not in and of itself, rather knowledge has an instrumental value. Thus, educational research should be conducted in terms of a functional analysis by relying on the instrumental value of what is taught.

The suggestion of this essay is that what distinguishes educational research from other branches of humanities is a triple value-ladenness. This is because the subject-matter of educational study – namely educational actions performed by teachers and students, are themselves double value-laden – and given that the endeavor of the educationist is also value-laden, it follows that a triple value-ladenness is involved in educational studies. However, why do we say that educational actions are double value-laden? This is because educational actions are attempts to change the present actions with regard to some ideal states considered and expressed in terms of aims of education. The present actions themselves are value-laden, even though they might be considered as undesirable states that should be changed, and then the ideal oriented educational actions will be double value-laden activities.

Now, the difference between say psychology and education is clear. Psychology deals with the present states of actions to explain how they have appeared, whether they are normal or abnormal actions. However, in educational activity, action is toward some ideal states (aims) in order to actualize them. In fact, psychology's realm, including one-layer value-laden actions, is the starting point of education to change them into the end states in terms of educational aims. Needless to say, when psychology comes to deal with treatment and health, it is actually indebted to education in general terms because any involvement with desirable states is related to the ideal woman or man, and this ideal picture belongs to the realm of philosophy of education. This holds even when our psychologist considers normal states of the society as desirable states and performs the treatment of his or her clients with regard to these states.

Having considered educational research as a triple value-laden activity, we can now conclude what kind of research needs to be done in the realm of education. There will be two kinds of research here. One kind will be an inferential research that can be called "ends-means," and the other an empirical one that might be called "means-ends" research.

In the first kind of research, we conduct a logical and inferential inquiry to know, given the aims we adopted, to what types of means we are logically allowed to appeal. Validity of this type of research is controlled

by logical rules for providing coherence. According to this type of validation, one cannot appeal to any kind of means regardless of their coherence with the aims being sought. As explained above, Clark has shown but one class of this kind of research as to the nature of the subject matter and the kind of teaching methods that are logically allowed to be used.[56] However, there can be other classes of the same kind. The one in order here is another candidate. In this case, we look for the coherent relations between educational aims, on one hand, and the relevant means, on the other. For instance, if one considers justice as an educational aim, he or she is not logically allowed to appeal to oppressive means.

We have called the second kind of research in the realm of education a "means-ends" type that is an empirical one. We should immediately mention that this type of research is not the same as what positivist philosophers of education meant by that (for example, Wolfgang Brezinka[57]). In a positivist view, the means-ends relation is being sought in a causal background – that is to say, causal mechanisms that are thought to be discovered are used to determine the means necessary to achieve the ends. However, in an Islamic view that human behavior is considered as action, it is not possible to look for causal mechanisms that lead to the desired action. However, as mentioned above, causal relations are considered as limits of action. Taking this in view, what we mean by the "means-ends" type of research is that it is twofold.

On the one hand, it consists of an inquiry that looks for the limits we encounter when actualizing the ends concerned – and, to say it the other way round, the inquiry looks for the possibilities available for achieving the ends. For instance, for a teacher who is blind, it is not possible to use some means for teaching, while there are other possibilities for him or her. It is clear that this kind of research cannot be conducted because it is dependent on human conditions, and this makes it empirical.

On the other hand, when the possibilities are made clear, the means-ends research looks for the consequences of actions being done in the domain of the possibilities. Even though we might determine the logical relations in "ends-means" research, but there could be a range of possibilities within the same logical relation that needs to be decided by means of empirical study. For instance, to take Clark's example of mathematics, one might consider it to be analytic, rather than synthetic. Then, it follows that the teacher should use teaching methods, which are coherent with the analyticity of mathematics. However, there might be a range of possibilities within the realm of analytic requirements. For instance, the teacher could use a teacher-centered method, a student-centered method, or a dialogical method. While all of these methods are within the realm of the analytic

requirement, their consequences could be different in achieving the aim of mathematics teaching. This is something that can be decided by an empirical study.

Clark has limited himself to the logical educational research, or to the "ends-means" research as we termed it, and does not consider a place for empirical or "means-ends" research. This is perhaps because of his avoidance of nomological and causal aspects of empirical research, as he states: "This post hoc status precludes educational research from being 'replicable', 'cumulative', 'generalized', nomological, identifying 'deep causal structures' and so on."[58] But, empirical study in its broad sense is not limited to nomological and causal relations. Empirical knowledge is the kind of knowledge that cannot be known a priori, however, this does not necessarily imply that empirical knowledge should be nomological and causal. Rather, this kind of knowledge can deal with cautious generalizations, as it can deal with actions and their consequences, rather than merely by behaviors and movements.

The final point about educational research concerns the familiar problem of the relation between "reasons" and "causes." Reasons are deeply involved in all action-oriented researches including educational investigations. The question is what is the relation between educational research and cause-oriented researches in other disciplines that somehow relate to human beings like physiology? This is a question in interdisciplinary terms, which every involved discipline encounters.

The answer to this question, based on the Islamic view of action, is as follows. The causes that are discovered in the neighbored disciplines of education should not be considered as "sources" of human action because this kind of view renders action to be a mere behavior or movement. According to this view, the explanation of human behavior is to discover the causes external to it that cause it. However, if we have the ontological commitment as to considering human behavior as action, then the relevant-causes should not be considered as the "sources" of actions concerned. Still, saving the nature of actions, the causes could be regarded as "limits" of actions. In other words, the relevant causes of an action provide a fence that within which the person performs his or her actions. For instance, in the studies on human genetics, some causes are found that determine the color of eyes or hair. However, this kind of relation cannot be held between genes and human actions given that actions are dependent to foundations like will. Still, genetic studies could be useful in relation to human actions by considering the causes found as the limits of the actions concerned.

Conclusion

The comparison between Charles Clark's action-oriented educational research and the one we suggested here inspired by the Islamic view of human action shows that there are considerable commonalities between them. Both of them avoid the mechanistic view of educational research in terms of causes and causal relations.

And both of them invite us to consider the behaviors involved in educational settings as actions in which values have an important place. Accordingly, educational activities are to be understood as endeavors toward some invaluable and preferred description.

A further agreement is that educational research should be conducted in an "ends-means" manner – that is to say, in terms of logical implications of end descriptions for the means employed.

There are also differences between the two views. Firstly, the distinction between fact and value held by Clark to differentiate education from social sciences is not acceptable according to the Islamic view. According to this view, all the so-called social sciences, including educational research, will be value-laden, but the characteristic of educational research needs to be sought in the triple value-ladenness compared to other branches of humanities that are double value-laden.

Secondly, in the Islamic view, in addition to the "ends-means" manner, a "means-ends" manner of research is regarded as necessary and useful. This requires that educational research have an empirical dimension that without it is understood in terms of positivistic terms. This kind of empirical research not only looks for the possibilities available for actions, but also investigates about the consequences of actions at the range of implications inferred in the "ends-means" type of research.

Notes

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33. Qur'ān (89:5).
34. Qur'ān (75:2).
35. Qur'ān (33:13).
36. Qur'ān (45:28).
37. Qur'ān (4:28).
38. Qur'ān (53:39–41).
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