A VALUE-BASED CURRICULUM: TOWARDS UPBRINGING AND MOULDING HOLISTIC LEARNERS

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Abstract

Curriculum is a major aspect in education. It plays a prominent role in upbringing and moulding learners. Interest in improving and enriching curriculum has always triggered the scholars and educators to suggest new ideas and fruitful recommendations. The process of nurturing learners carrying values and virtues requires a holistic and a well-designed curriculum. Such integral curriculum helps to yield highly educated and well-moulded learners equipped with religious and worldly based knowledge. The designed curriculum should highlight the religious teaching, known as God-presence curriculum, manifested as Core Curriculum without side lining the worldly required knowledge. This paper highlights on the effectiveness of value-based curriculum which blends the revealed (religious) and acquired (worldly) knowledge harmoniously aiming at developing highly-educated, discipline and well-mannered learners. The discussion and assessment of the great scholars regarding the holistic curriculum will be the framework in which the curriculum and related discourse served as the central issue. The author will also look into the concept of life-long learning, a 24-hour education system and how a comprehensive curriculum could develop noble characters and significantly reduce moral crisis among the young generation.

Keywords: Holistic curriculum, Well-mannered learners;

INTRODUCTION

Education is the core element in human development and nurturing learners with knowledge and human values. Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man’s spirit, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistics towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. As in Islamic education, knowledge is essential in preparing learners to be a vicegerent and a good servant. Education is to transmit a common set of beliefs, values, norms, understanding from the adult generation to its youths.

In the Western world, the purpose of education is prominently for the economic growth of a nation-(Ibrahim, 2001). Besides, the secular civilisation has caused the unity of Islamic educational system to be dichotomised, not only within Islamic society, but even within the souls of individual Muslims. Secularism creates civilisation without God which has brought major catastrophe of desacralisation-dehumanisation. (Syed M.Naquib Al-Attas, 1978).

Materialistic civilisation patterned by hedonism, permissiveness, greed and extravagance has transformed human beings into soul-less creations. The world is obviously being hit with a spiritual crisis which desperately needs salvation, which is Islam in the true sense to bring back the human values solidly, physically-spiritually through education. The Western colonisers are aware of the need of withdrawing Islam out of the Muslims’ minds and secularising the education system in schools and higher education institution as their starting point to achieve their goal. (Che Noraini & Hasan, 2014).
CURRENT ISSUES ON EDUCATION

Now, education has become a tool of economic mobilization for the socio-economy of individuals or a country. The dominance of this attitude in education has given birth to a psychosocial disease, especially among students and parents, known as the "diploma disease" (Syed M.Naquib Al-Attas, 1978). It is an effort to reach a certain degree of education not because of education’s sake, but because of its economic and social value (ibid)

This education system ultimately directs human being to the world without its Creator. The more we learn, the more the separation from the Creator is felt because the current education system stipulates that the Creator does not directly exist. The chaos in the existing education system has long been discussed by Islamic scholars as well as the Western researchers.

The dilemma in the education system that exists today, was summed up by Syed Naquib (1978) as:

a. Confusion and error in knowledge which have created conditions for:

b. The loss of manners within the community. Conditions arising from (a) and (b) are:

c. The emergence of leaders who are not qualified to become legitimate leaders of the Muslim community, void of noble akhlaq, does not possess the intellectual and spiritual level required to fill in the Muslim leadership, who maintain the conditions in (a) and ensure the continuous power on the community affairs by leaders like them who dominate all areas.

It is high time and crucial that a God-presence curriculum must be re-drawn in the picture with the aim to build the best Ummah ever raised in this world. Spiritual education is intensely needed, especially in the context of current development of civilisation. Islamic education often considers individual success and happiness in this world and hereafter as the most important ambition and purpose of education.

Indeed, education based on Islam must uncompromisingly be the Core element through the inculcation of Tawheedic Values and Islam as Core, manifested through Curriculum. It is based in the fact that the purpose of education is to produce insan as vicegerent of Allah to bring prosperity on earth. Character development (adab) is the most important element to be cultivated from the nature of insan and be the core and supersede other knowledge.

Based on the Islamic perspectives, knowledge has always been imbued with the essence of the sacred even when dealing with apparently worldly subjects, and throughout Islamic history, education has possessed a religious character even when dealing with subjects such as mathematics, medicine etc.

Realising the true meaning of education in Islam and the flaw in the current education system, a comprehensive integral curriculum should take place in our academic landscape. It has to be made recognised as all this while it seems like the God-presence knowledge is insignificant. A thorough transformation has to be carried out, based on the divine mould of Allah SWT without putting aside the current knowledge of science and technology. It is time to bring back the education to a righteous path and search for the real meaning of the creation of human beings as the caliphs of Allah SWT on earth.
Education in Malaysia is an effort towards expanding the potential of individuals holistically and integrated in order to produce a balanced and harmonious human beings in terms of intellect, spirit, emotion and physical based on trust and obedience to Allah SWT. This effort is to produce good Malaysians who are educated, outstanding, well-mannered with true sense of akhlaq, responsible and able to achieve prosperity and contribute to a harmonious, prosperous ummah and country.

Building insan in the true sense and today’s reality often feels like a huge challenge. This period is the period of dehumanization, the crisis of the erosion of humanity values. The implementation of the 24-hour education system through curriculum and co-curriculum activities should be implemented in stages and phases. It is crucial to realise and aware about the importance of wholesome curriculum in moulding an all-rounded educated learner towards attaining wishes and aspirations of Islamic education. This requires mental and physical preparation of all parties involved.

**SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In developing the desired Islamic value-based education, adjustments need to be made at all levels namely the authorities which include ministry, curriculum developer as well as school, educational institutions, as well as teachers.

The resolutions from 'The Muslim Universities Vice-Chancellors' / Presidents' Forum' organised by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia and The Nation Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), USM, from 19th to 20th October 2010 suggested that:

1. There is an urgent need to look for an Islamic approach to higher education, collectively, for developing minds with Islamic and universal values.

2. Given the diverse structures and ideologies of higher education models, Muslim universities must focus on a criterion-referenced as opposed to norm-referenced higher education approach. The latter is derived from the Eurocentric system whilst the former is based on the best practices in early Muslim and relevant western institutions.

Hence, it is our responsibility to restore the education based on Islam which must be totally separated from the fossilised Eurocentric ideology and persistently embarked on actualising the true concept of a university based on Islam.

**Actions by the Authorities**

Looking at the prominent role played by the authorities in moulding up the basis of a curriculum, the authorities should work hand in hand with the planners of religious education in Muslim countries to give a serious consideration to the guidelines issued by World Conferences on Muslim Education in achieving a unified religious curriculum (Che Noraini & Hassan, 2014). One of the issues raised is the awareness on the importance of religious education which must be raised especially among the youngsters. Perhaps ways to educate the younger generation can be planned.

In addition to that, Muslim leaders have to realize that in Islamic education in Muslim countries, the issue of Islamic curriculum is very crucial. This is due to the reason that the prominent aim of Islamic education is directly connected to personality development (Solehah et. al., 2014).
issue is more related to building up individual’s inner characters and not just a matter of gaining knowledge or sharpening the intelligence. It is hoped that when the individuals are educated with strong religious basis, their faith in Islam will be their guidance in making any decision in the future. In order to design such curriculum, they need to really understand the concept of “Islamic Integrated Curriculum” as when designing with confusion, firm foundation will not be built (Rosnani, 1996).

The authorities of religious schools should also contribute in easing the process of entering the schools. This means that all Muslim children should be given equal access to Islamic education so that their potentials can be fully developed. Besides that, the curriculum developer must also be ready to revise the current curriculum as well as the textbooks used. This is to make suitable changes to the content that may not be relevant to the context of the students’ life as well as Islam. This is because the content of the curriculum should be contextualized in order to produce holistic individuals who are well-balanced intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.

Roles of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions should also contribute to the implementation of Islamic integrated education. Teacher training institutions should take charge in preparing the future teachers so that the curriculum can be implemented in the Islamic schools successfully. The future teachers should be able to practice the appropriate teaching methods to the appropriate group of students so that they can see the relevance of learning certain topics to their lives. In addition, Islamic educational institutions should produce Islamic scholars who are proficient in both social sciences and religious education. They probably can be the agents to improve the education stream by integrating religious elements with other subjects. This is because many Muslim scholars and academicians have stated that in order to solve educational problems, both religious and acquired sciences in curriculum should be integrated (Solehah et. al., 2014). Finally, as educational institutions are the place where academicians gather, journals that discuss issues on Islamic integrated curriculum can be published. This will allow individuals who have the interest in the field to use them as a platform to share knowledge and enlighten other individuals on the issue related to integrated curriculum.

Teachers’ Responsibilities

The last important agent of change will be the teachers. Teachers need to be trained to be able to make their teaching meaningful and related to students’ lives. This is because teachers are the nearest persons to the students who, at the same time, are knowledge contributors. However, this is not the only role that should be played by them. They should be able to make the students “relate contemporary issues and reality with religious understanding and appropriate religious ruling” (Solehah et. al., 2014, p.558). This can be done through integrated teaching approaches and methodologies. They should be able to educate the students effectively to fulfil their needs so that the students will be able to apply the knowledge learnt with strong faith in Islam.

A 24-Hour Education System

Nurturing insan with strong religious basis is not an easy task and cannot be done in a short period of time. Due to that, a systematic education systems need to be immediately developed. One of the ways to achieve this is through the implementation of a 24-hour education system. The benefit of this system is the ability to connect the three main educational features of family education, academic and environment. Wholesome insan would be developed throughout this
system who are also able to lead others as they have strong faith in Islam. The crucial domains of this system are *ruh*, physical and character based on the *Al-Quran* and *As-Sunnah*. This curriculum educates the students not just formally but also informally through the focus on both curricular and extra-curricular activities which aims at shaping *adabic* individuals through the process of personality building.

The ideal form of education is one that nurtures from the roots, one that grows the values of Islam at the beginning of education. Schools should infuse young minds with a sense of good *akhirat* that would one day flourish into a worldview that mirrors Islam in its true sense. The current education system, while patterned steadily in designs of the west and having had the benefit of time, is not set in stone. Change is yet possible and a change for an integral curriculum is much needed.

Learners emerging from this system would be a wholesome insan who is able to guide others in the path of righteousness, as they view the world through the lense of Islam. The integral curriculum is developed based on prominent domains namely the *ruh, aqal*, physical and character based on the *Al-Quran* and *As-Sunnah*. Those elements are woven into the formal and informal learning anchored by a 24-hour Islamic based teaching and learning concept.

In actualising this religious curriculum, a great reset to the educational system along with all parties’ utmost preparation mentally and physically. This huge paradigm shift requires patience, perseverance, endeavour, sincerity and strong determination.

**REFERENCES**