

## The *Qur'ānic* perspective on Education and its obligations in the present Educational curriculum

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### Abstract

*This paper is aimed at highlighting the main features of Islāmic education and curricular perspective in the Qur'ān. Curriculum as the methodology, the Qur'ān uses to transmit and teach its themes and topics. Here, curriculum in the Qur'ān is introduced with an emphasis on the techniques the Qur'ān chooses to teach its followers. The curriculum in reference to the development and redirection of students' thought processes to help them find more meaning and significance in their lives. The focus of this paper is on giving the learner freedom of choice while developing thinking abilities and at the same time addressing human relations among learners and the world. Mainly, educational curriculum in the Qur'ān calls for teaching the person as a whole, connecting all aspects of life including the social, intellectual and spiritual. It describes how the curriculum was implemented by the Prophet Muhammad <sup>(s.a.w)</sup> as the teacher, and practiced by his followers as the students.*

**Keywords:** *Qur'ān*, Knowledge, Education, Curriculum.

### Introduction

Teaching the *Qur'ān* is the noblest work in this life; because it is directly enlightening the minds of creation with the light of Almighty Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>, and this was confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad <sup>(s.a.w)</sup> when he said:

***“The best amongst you (Muslims) are the ones who learn Qur'ān and teach it (to others)”. (Al-Bukhari, 1997, 6:5027, p.444).***

Education in Islām is “an education which trains the sensibility of an individual, in such a manner that their attitude towards life, their actions, decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islām”. (Hussain and Ashraf, 1979, p.1) It prepares human beings for holistic life with no separation of this temporary life which ends with death, and the eternal life that begins after death. (Sarwar, 1996, p.9) It is a means of training the body, mind and soul through imparting the knowledge of all kinds i.e. fundamental as compulsory and specialised as optional. (Conference Book , 1977, p.7) Education in Islām is not merely of acquiring intellectual knowledge but it is a mean of moulding the nature and character of an individual so that they can collectively represent Islāmic values, behave as *Khalīfatullāh fī al-ard* (vicegerent of Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> on the earth), witness of true, nobility and human greatness. (Conference Book , 1977, p.6) Similarly, education is “a process through which human beings are trained and prepared in a concerted way to do their Creator's bidding in this life (*Dunyā*) to be rewarded in the life after death (*Ākhirah*)”. (Conference Book , 1977, p.9) Educational curriculum in the *Qur'ān* is introduced with an emphasis on the techniques the *Qur'ān* uses to teach its followers. Mainly, education curriculum in the *Qur'ān* calls for teaching the person as a whole, connecting all aspects of life as the social, intellectual, and spiritual.

### Education in the *Qur'ān*

The word “curriculum” in this article refers mainly to developing and directing the thinking abilities of students in order for them to live fruitful lives and improve their world. (Zacharias, 2004, p.2) The terminology of education from Islāmic perspective is often defined by Muslim scholars from three different dimensions which are reflected in different concepts introduced, important among them are;

- *Tarbiyyah* – the process of education that gives emphasis on physical and intellectual development of an individual;
- *Tādīb* – the process of education that gives emphasis on nurturing good human beings with knowledge of the faith and the noble codes of conduct/ethics approved by Islām, so that he may place himself and deal with others in society with justice.
- *Tālīm* – the process of education that is based on teaching and learning.

The word curriculum in the *Qur'ān* includes guiding individuals to maturity while expanding their understanding of moral and social rules in addition to teaching new content. The word education in the *Qur'ān*, deals with the individual and his relation with Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>, society and the world. The concept of education in Islām must take into consideration of all the dimensions of teaching and learning activities that reflect the above concepts of *tarbiyyah*, *tādīb* and *tālīm*.

There are two different types of knowledge mentioned in the *Qur'ān*: the known knowledge, called *‘Ilm* in Arabic, and hidden knowledge, *Al-Ghayb*. *‘Ilm* refers to the type of knowledge that humans have in terms of their ability to feel with their senses and comprehend with their minds, such as mathematics, literature, arts, sciences, and other subjects taught at school or college. *‘Ilm* or the known knowledge is the knowledge that humans are required to seek throughout their lifetimes. The words “knowledge” and “education” refer to all types of known knowledge, including religious, literary, historical, and scientific knowledge. The second type of knowledge, *Al-Ghayb*, is the unknown. *Al-Ghayb* is one of the basic foundations of the belief system in the *Qur'ān*. Examples of *Al-Ghayb* include the origin of Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>, time and place of death, and the time for the Day of Judgment. Muslims are obliged to believe in *Al-Ghayb* and are required not to pursue it as something that can be proven. The word *Al-Ghayb* is mentioned in the *Qur'ān* numerous times. One of the verses states that the first aspect of believers is that they “**Believe in Al-Ghayb, the hidden**” (*Al-Qur'ān*, 2:2). In several verses in the *Qur'ān*, Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> describes Himself as the only one who knows *Al-Ghayb* by saying:

“*Allāh* <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>, *the one who knows the unseen/unknown and the visible/knowable*” (*Al-Qur'ān*, 39:46)

“*With Him are the keys of the unseen (Al-Ghayb). No one has knowledge of it other than Him...*” (*Al-Qur'ān*, 6:59)

### Theory of Knowledge in the *Qur'ān*

In reading the *Qur'ān* and coding aspects of curriculum, there is usually no one clear definition of the theory of knowledge, yet great emphasis is placed on seeking knowledge. In general, theories of knowledge offer guiding principles for developing an educational system. They aid curriculum designers in building their own methodologies to reach their designed goals or objectives. (Hansen et. al., 1992, p. 25) Each educational system incorporates its own particular theory of knowledge that fits its needs and desires. What’s more, educational philosophies evolve over time. Muslims believe the *Qur'ān* carries a universal message and is not limited to time or place. Therefore, *Qur'ān* does not define a theory of knowledge to be used and

applied because societies change constantly. Instead of defining a theory of knowledge, curriculum in the *Qur'ān* uses four epistemologies.

- First, the lack of a clear definition of curriculum in the *Qur'ān* has allowed Islāmic scholars to provide various definitions and explanations of epistemology based on the time and place in which they live and using the same bases as those used in the *Qur'ān*.
- Secondly, the *Qur'ān* encourages people to pursue knowledge.
- Thirdly, the *Qur'ān* gives a detailed description of knowledgeable people and their behaviors, morals, and actions, which is more beneficial than a philosophical definition of morals.
- Fourthly, and since people may read the same text and come away with different interpretations and understandings, curriculum in the *Qur'ān* uses demonstration to send a clear message of its teachings. Demonstrating the characteristics of educators and educated people encourages learners to build on these qualities.

### **Educational Requirements in the *Qur'ān* Application of Knowledge**

There are certain expectations and assertions that curriculum in the *Qur'ān* anticipates and encourages its followers to adopt. The first expectation is the application of knowledge. The expected application of knowledge is internal (within the human self) first and external (communicating with others) second. People are not required to study merely for the sake of learning; they are required to apply knowledge towards the improvement of themselves and society, to

***“Follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord” (Al-Qur'ān, 7:3)***

For example, people learn morals to improve their own daily behaviours, but they study politics to improve society and to achieve justice and peace. Many verses require the knowledge a person gains to be reflected in his actions. For example:

***And say (unto them, O Prophet): ‘Act! And Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> will behold your deeds, and (so will) His Apostle, and the believers: and (in the end) you will be brought before Him who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind -and then He will make you understand what you have been doing.’ (Al-Qur'ān, 9:105)***

The Prophet Mohammad <sup>(s.a.w)</sup> is the role model for all Humanity, and he was the first to apply all knowledge that he gained to all his daily life activities. Hadhrat Aisha <sup>(R.A.)</sup>, the prophet's wife, described the Prophet Muhammad <sup>(s.a.w)</sup> as a *Qur'ān* walking on earth.

### **Intention**

Another requirement of curriculum in the *Qur'ān* is intention. The *Qur'ān* asks its followers to seek knowledge with an intention to satisfy the Creator and get closer to Him. Intention in the *Qur'ān* is a basic foundation of any action:

***“Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is oft-forgiving most forbearing” (Al-Qur'ān, 2:225)***

Some very simple acts are of great value in Allāh's (s.w.t) view because of the pure intentions of the applicant. Other great acts lose their value because their intentions are not directed toward satisfying Allāh (s.w.t), as Allah (s.w.t) says:

***“As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in our ways”*** (Al-Qur'ān, 2:276)

Every person has to answer to Allāh (s.w.t) for what he does or fails to do according to his intentions. Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w) confirms the necessity of intention before action by saying:

*“The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions, and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended”.* (Al-Bukhari, 1997, 1:54, p.85)

This hadith explains that any action must be intended to satisfy Allāh (s.w.t) and get closer to Him, as long as it does not contradict the commandments or prohibitions of the Qur'ān. Allāh (s.w.t) asks people to seek knowledge with the intention of learning as a response to His orders.

### Recognition of the Self

Curriculum in the Qur'ān calls for respect and an appreciation for individuals, as it says:

***“We have honored the sons of Adam....”*** (Al-Qur'ān, 17:70)

Curriculum in the Qur'ān recognizes that learners have different abilities, interests, prior experiences, and learning potential, and the Qur'ān encourages learners to learn about themselves first before learning about the world. Curriculum in the Qur'ān encourages learners to try to understand who they are and how their understanding of what they learn impacts their lives. Many verses in the Qur'ān ask the reader or listener a question as a way to open a dialogue, with the ultimate goal of achieving recognition of the self. Allah (s.w.t) says:

***“...can the blind be held equal to the seeing? Will ye then consider not?”*** (Al-Qur'ān, 6:50)

*“These two kinds (of men) may be compared to the blind and deaf, and those who can see and hear well. Are they equal when compared? Will ye not then take heed?”* (Al-Qur'ān, 11:24)

Curriculum in the Qur'ān connects self-development with each individual's own actions:

***“And whatever (wrong) any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden...”*** (Al-Qur'ān, 6:164)

### Critical Thinking

Curriculum in the Qur'ān encourages the development of critical learners who are able to learn in any context. The Qur'ān considers thinking and using one's reason as a commitment that people must make. Allāh (s.w.t) says,

***“How little you reflect”*** (Al-Qur'ān, 7:3)

*“We set out in detail the signs for people who will reason and understand”.* (Al-Qur'ān, 30:28)

Curriculum in the Qur'ān develops critical thinking through several techniques. The first is by directing students to observe details within larger contexts in order to recognize the different creations in the world and how those creations are related to their own lives. The Qur'ān presents signs for critical thinkers as a way to encourage them to use their mental abilities to discover the world around them. Curriculum in the Qur'ān also encourages critical thinking through the use of storytelling. It uses stories of past generations to demonstrate the importance of critical thinking

and its positive results. Curriculum in the *Qur'ān* responds to the argument by inviting people to use their reason.

### **Spirituality**

The last major requirement in the *Qur'ān*'s curriculum is spirituality. Spirituality unifies all aspects of life as it recognizes and accepts all types of students and ethnic groups. Curriculum in the *Qur'ān* deals with spirituality in two ways. First, the *Qur'ān* obliges every Muslim to seek knowledge, and then it connects the intelligence of the heart and mind, as in

**“Have they not hearts with which to understand”.** (*Al-Qur'ān*, 9:87)

By seeking knowledge, humans are able to know more about Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>, which leads them closer to Him and therefore develops their spirituality. Secondly, curriculum in the *Qur'ān* reflects that our deeds affect our souls:

**“Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds”.** (*Al-Qur'ān*, 74:38)

*“Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul...”*. (*Al-Qur'ān*, 41:46)

Additionally, the more good deeds a person does, the closer to Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> he gets, and the more spiritual he becomes. Therefore, each individual gains spiritual and material success through the application of *Qur'ānic* teachings. When the *Qur'ān* provides guidance, it is always combined with moral lessons that improve human life as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

Islāmic philosophy of education aspires to Shape the human being based on matching between the three dimensions of sense, mind and religious faith. This education believes that human life progress is a duty of every Muslim. Therefore, Islāmic Education aware to the importance of development thinking and personal autonomy in order to achieve ideal values. It is apply continues negation to the realty in aim to change and improve it toward a better human life.

In materializing the concept and philosophy of education in *Qur'ānic* perspective the following strategies to be practised in the existing educational institutions throughout all levels:

- Education in Islām is not merely of acquiring intellectual knowledge but it is a mean of moulding the nature and character of an individual so that they can collectively represent Islāmic values and behave as *Khalīfatullāh fī al-ard* (vicegerent of Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup> on the earth).
- Establishing integration between Religious Islāmic knowledge and Modern Secular Knowledge by not compartmentalizing Islām as only one subject taught in schools, but Islām is a way of life that applies in all sort of knowledge.
- The concept of education in Islām must take into consideration of all the dimensions consist of *tarbiyyah*, *ta'līm* and *ta'dīb*. What does it matter is not the concept, but the practice, methodology and its objectives. *Tarbiyyah* denote the development and training of people in various aspects and to describe the process of upbringing the children as the parents provide them with the physical, educational, moral, and spiritual needs to help them grow and become useful parties in the society. *Ta'līm* is the development of knowledge through the process of teaching and learning (instruction). *Insān adabī* (Perfect Man) is the one who is sincerely conscious of his responsibilities towards the true Allāh <sup>(s.w.t)</sup>; who understands and fulfils his obligations to himself and others in his society with justice, and who constantly strives to improve every aspect of himself towards perfection.

- Serious assessment on student's Islamic moral and ethical, in addition of examination and class assessment. For example, student who score high marks in examination is not necessary considered as an excellent student unless he/she is also behave practically.
- The main responsibility for students' education falls on parents who take credit for their probity and bear the burden of their errors, while teachers are only sharing part of this responsibility.
- Curriculum in the *Qur'ān* encourages seeking knowledge and describes the behaviours of knowledgeable people to make it easier for learners to comprehend and follow. Later identified aspects of the *Qur'ān's* curriculum in terms of the necessity of applying knowledge, having an intention behind seeking and applying knowledge, recognition of the self, development of critical thinking, and spirituality.

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