



The Educational Curriculum in the Religious Schools and its Effect on the Islamic Ideology

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic educational curriculum serves the following purpose: It is the individual responsibility of every human being to continue education in order to refine and refine the soul and develop mental and spiritual capacities. According to Islamic philosophy, the motive for continuous learning is religious, as it is a Muslim's obligation to be in a condition of continuous learning at all times. This is in light of the teachings of the Most Honorable Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah (PBUH): ((Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave)). This means that any Muslim person (young, young, old, man, and woman) must always learn and be teacher.

Keywords: Islamic thought, education, science, Islamic application, individual, spiritual education, religion, psychology.



Introduction:

This approach deals with the learning method in the Islamic schools, which is concerned with post-graduate students who joined the school after completing their primary education. Therefore, this research requires a detailed view of the pre-graduate education stage, helping to shed the light on the curriculum of the schools.

Moreover, the determining of the educational curriculum requires provided background context of the envisaged goals, which are the aims of Islamic education, and these are defined by:

What does teaching aim to? Do all schools have the same aims? Answering these questions supposes other questions. For example,

Do we have a unified method for teaching?

Does this method excellent according to all schools understand for teaching aims?

Does this approach include clear challenges for subjects, teaching stage, methods, activities, midterms or final exams?

According to this, the researcher for teaching method in Islamic schools may face difficulty to accurately determine the factors of this method and its aims. Then he must deal with this method first before starting to search for its details because Muslim teachers did not unite any method inside or outside the school, although challenges came at a late stage, but they quote what is prevalent in modern educational systems.

Section One

The Concept, Factors and Aims of the Curriculum

I. The Curriculum Definition

A. Definitions:

The word Curriculums “in Arabic: Al-Manhaj” is derived from the word course “Al-Nahej”, which means “the clear way”. There is also the word method “Al-minhaj”, adaptation of a way “Entahaj”, which means acknowledged it and became clear and evident ⁽¹⁾.

Approach “Al-Nahej” is “the clear and evident way”, ⁽²⁾. The plural is “Nuhouj”. Method has the same meaning as well-that is the clear way. As narrated by



Al-Abbas: “the Prophet died after [He] guided you to the “coursed” way, which means clear and evident way. Conducting a way means making it clear and enlightened.

The meaning of the approach is conducting a clear way in order to achieve specific aims. The word approach “Minhaj” was mentioned in the holy Quran, as Allah say: *لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ* (4)

“To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute;”

It means legislation and clear way in religion. This word indicates to conducting any clear way, it is not given to a specific field, rather it is used in “intellectual method”, “political method”, “social method”, etc..

In the educational field, this word is developed to mean programming, determining a book for a specific stage or setting a collection of books for several stages that are used for educational aims.

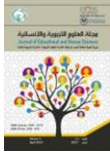
Moreover, the idiomatic meaning of the method is related to realizing the school what it role is and even realizing the students what their role is. According to what was determined by the traditional school, curriculum focused on transmitting the accumulated heritage across generations. This heritage is very important, so it is necessary to transmit it to students. The traditional curriculum is based on tow pillars, they are:

The first one is the teacher who pour information in his students` minds. **The second one** is the students who must to perceive what the teacher transmitted to them.

The traditional curriculum is based on a fundamental pillar which is the subjects. It was prevalent that the curriculum is a group of subjects that are determined by the school or by the teacher where students must to submit to them, receive them and memorize them- such as reading, writing and calculation. Because of education progress, the curriculum was progressed as well. This progress was a result of turning the school from being traditional into being modern where curriculum became more comprehensive and extensive than the abstract subjects.

A. The Terminology Definition:

There are many definitions for curriculum in the modern education. It is an



integrated system of human and unhuman resources that are derived from society. They interact together inside the school according to specific regulations and standards in order to provide their outputs with desirable experiences in society. Curriculum in this meaning helps the learner to improve and develop all his energies and abilities because it is not limited, rather it contains all the practical and educational aspects. Curriculum means “all the experiences that are organized by the school and are practiced and supervised by the learner inside and outside the school to occur specific changes in their behavior that are definite by systematic educational aims”

II. The Elements of Curriculum

When we search in elements of curriculum, we will find many similar definitions. They all indicate that curriculum is related with all the actions that school do to achieve its goals and visions because it contains the experiences inside and outside the schools such as the activities that students interact with.

Curriculum has many elements such as:

1. The Learner: he is the target of the curriculum.
2. The Goal: it is what is wanted to be achieved through learning and applying activities.
3. Content: it is the different types of subjects.
4. Activities: all the different activities that enhance learner`s skills and mental abilities.
5. Means: all means and tool that are depended on in order to know whether goals are achieved or not and even to know what did the learner gain through his studying.

III. The Functions of Curriculum

Because curriculum has many functions and fields that help in achieving goals, it aims to reach systematic goals. There is an increasing of subjects according to the progress of society needs because curriculum has to meet these needs through different activities and experiences that are gained by the students. These experiences are results of the subjects that are directly related to the social life. There are three functions for curriculum to achieve its teaching`s goals. They can be summed up as the following:

1. Shedding the light on the social values of the individual.
2. Motivating the individual`s talents.
3. Preparing the individual for the social life.



Professor Ahmad Fouad Al-Ahawani thinks that all these functions reach the same result that is “preparing the individual socially”.

IV. The Academic Aims of Curriculum

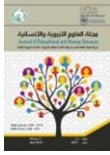
Muslims agreed with the major goal of education that is seeking Allah`s pleasure. They seek His pleasure through preparing the individual according to religious teachings, these preparing needs several kinds of knowledge, but the supreme knowledge is the knowledge of Allah the Almighty and His attributes. Thus, Muslim tended to pay attention to the subjects that help in reaching the supreme goal which is the knowledge of Allah the Almighty.

The supreme goal never cancels or under-estimates other goals. There are multiple goals that are developed during the time, they are not limited. Especially, when differences stormed the Islamic environment and expanded to include the goals and purposes of the teaching. Some tended to set a single goal for teaching- which is the religious goal. On the other hand, others tended to set different goals, such as the religious goal, the social goal and the psychic goal.

Some said that there are not absolute goals for education, so we have to mention the adopter of the doctrine then we have to mention the education`s goal that fits this doctrine. The method of teaching is derived from doctrine that is adopted. For Muslims, the differences in the goal of teaching and its means is because the differences of the mental doctrine.

The multiplicity of goals is because the multiplicity of interpretations for goals and their relation with the social life. We can summarize a set of Islamic educational goals, such as raising the individual to become a humane who has good traits in order to achieve self-discipline and provide himself with knowledge to be an active part in the social life. Educational is endless, it began in mother`s womb and it will last until human life ends.

Consequently, the main goal of all of the above is either for the continual education that is related to the individual, or is an individual responsibility aiming to self-discipline and developing his mental and spiritual abilities. According to Islamic education, the main goal of the continual learning is the religious motive-where every Muslim has to learn. The prophet Mohammad shed the light on learning by his hadith “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” which means all Muslims have to learn whether they are children, youths, elders, men and women.



Section Two

The Curriculum

I. The Initial and Early Curriculum “Teaching Children”:

Curriculum reflects the social environment, or it is the result of the needs of this environment. The prevalent environment for Muslims since the beginning of Islam until accessing to the teaching stage in schools and beyond, is a religious environment, so the specialized curriculum at teaching children is the axis of religion. Therefore, the subjects which contains are religious or other subjects which help to understand the religious ones.

According to some educators' overviews or some of those who were interested in students' learning process, such as Al-Qabsi; the curriculum is divided into two parts. The first is compulsory and the second is optional. The compulsory subjects are the holy Qur'an, prayers and worshipping, also some grammar, Arabic language and Arabs, but can we consider that this division as the dominant part of the educational curriculum for children? Or is it merely an educational opinion expressed by Al-Qabsi?

Tracking what was prevalent in the early stages of the education, especially in the religious schools shows that compulsory studies were a binding path for religious school teachers and for the children also. And so that the parents were interested in teaching their children the holy Qur'an in order to perform the required acts of worshipping and prayers above all. In addition to that, the recitation of the holy Qur'an is one of the important things urged by Islam religion as stated in the Qur'anic verses or in the prophetic Hadith. The optional subjects are ancillary subjects that give the children the ability to acquire some of the concepts they need in their practical life, or pave the way for them to complete their education; such as, arithmetic, grammar, Arabic and other subjects. Although there is a general theme for the education of the children, this theme cannot be considered as a curriculum for education, and the even dividing the sections into compulsory and optional wasn't standard in the religious Qur'anic schools.

In general, the educational curriculum of the children isn't common or written; it evolved over time, so we can call it a (conventional curriculum) in which teachers cite its articles from each other, or they adapt its articles commensurate with their social environment. This approach is based on three principles:

- 1- Reading
- 2- Writing
- 3- Teaching mathematical exercises

Reading was the base of this curriculum, and the first specific material for learning how to read is the holy Qur'an, Muslims gave huge interests in teaching their children reading and memorizing the holy Qur'an; therefore the Qur'an became the main focus



of education in the early stages, especially in religious qur'anic schools.

The Qur'an is the holy book that all Muslims refer to in all their matters, because the Qur'an includes all the religious teachings Muslims follow in their worshipping, dealing with people and the origins of beliefs, also the learning method of reading from the holy Qur'an helps children to learn the proper pronunciation, such as; intonation, proper Arabic language and reading correctly. The standardization of the reading subject from the holy Qur'an united the reading approach in all the religious schools or for the tutors and private disciples, so learning how to read became necessary in this curriculum, because it includes learning the recitation of the holy book, and this obligation is related to another dimension which is teaching worshipping as it was mentioned before.

The first worshipping which is the base of religion is prayers and it doesn't complete without reading Al-Fatiha and other holy verses from the holy Qur'an, as for parents they must teach their sons and daughters reading these holy verses to recite them in their prayers. This is the minimum compulsory education and even for those who didn't complete their education. Starting with teaching the holy Qur'an was the main tradition and it was mentioned in the biographies of the followers since the time of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and what scholars followed except a few of them called for starting with mathematics or poetry.

If we follow the thoughts of scientists, thinkers, philosophers and educators before and after the period of schools, we will find congruence in calling for starting with the Qur'an, and this was mentioned in the famous book of Ibn Sahnoun (Etiquette of teachers), as well as Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Qabsi and others. The only famous scholar who departed from this theory is Mohammad bin Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-M'afri, he criticized easts methods of teaching and following the methods of starting with the holy Qur'an. However, Ibn Khaldoun opposes this approach in the first preparation of children and he says: "I know that teaching children the holy Qur'an is one of the religious practices followed by Muslims and included by their ancestors, because it strengthens the faith and beliefs from the holy verses of the Qur'an, and some of the Hadiths, also the holy Qur'an became the source of religious education which is the base."

However, the attention given to reading the holy Qur'an including the religious rites was corresponded with a similar interest which is teaching how to write, and it was shown by Ibn Khaldoun in his text on the interests of calligraphy, which is also based on the Islamic educational curriculum, and its source in the holy Qur'an as stated in the first holy verses:

(اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ) (19)
(Recite in the name of your Lord who created -Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous -Who taught by the pen - Taught man that which he knew not)).

Therefore, reading is connected with teaching pen which means writing, and became one of the main foundations of the curriculum in the early stages, thus the holy Qur'an is not only a material for reading, but also for writing which



was mentioned earlier in talking about Qur'anic religious schools. Ibn Sahnoun defines this by saying: " they should learn how to apply grammar to the Qur'an and this is compulsory, also the form, spelling, proper reading and psalmody."

According to this, the text reveals to us that included as well as reading and writing – some of the grammar and understanding the Qur'anic text and the proper reading. Moreover, determining the teaching methods is included in the educational curriculum for children by giving the interest to memorizing as a group work in the religious school as the teacher starts reading a verse (Sorah) and the children repeat it after him and each boy has a board to write on what he wants to memorize, then he erase it to write new things, also it wasn't necessary that children should memorize all the verses of the Qur'an. Within the common curriculum there are other elements, such as; punishment which is if the boy makes a mistake in writing or spelling or memorizing or if he avoids studying and learning and if he runs out of the religious school, the teacher punishes him by advising and then by threatening and the last option is hitting if advising didn't work. As for reading and writing these subjects require an exam or a test performed by the teacher in order to verify that the child passed the first stage of studying, and if the child has passed the first learning stage in the school, he should be tested with what he memorized from the holy Qur'an and writing, also the exam of memorizing the Qur'an is common as (Khatmiya). Exercising remained in the educational curriculum of the children and it's separated from the teaching in religious schools. Islam religion insisted on teaching exercises, such as; swimming and archery taught by parents or tutors and these exercises include: horseback riding, archery and swimming, as most of these exercises are inspired by the hadith of the prophet Mohammad (Pbuh): (Teach your children swimming and archery.). These physical sports prepare the child for the military upbringing; it enables him to join the army. Physical training began at an early age, according to Misquih's book (Refinement of morals): the child should be trained to walking, moving, riding and doing sports, so that these physical activities increase gradually in the stages of life without any specific system.

II. The Curriculum of Graduate Studies

The curriculum differs in the second stage, which is the very same stage of graduate studies, from that of undergraduate ones since it is not restricted or specified within subjects or time, whether for works or endowments. Moreover, it is not subject to that strict system witnessed by children at private Koranic schools. Therefore, if the educational system at this stage is subject to the optional principle, that is, the relationship between the teacher and the student since the curriculum is governed by the same principle, i.e. the selection of subjects, books, teaching methods and other curriculum components within the general framework of schools curriculum when the education process takes place in the school, it is not subject to any specific restrictions in the mosque and other places. So, the teacher selects the subject, all its related things



and branches, while the student has the right to select the teachers and the subjects; however, this principle of selection did not preclude the existence of standard elements or common teaching subjects. As for the curriculum of the graduate stage, it may be divided into two major sections; (25).

1. The religious - literary curriculum.
2. The scientific – literary curriculum.

Each of these two sections can be divided into other branches and subjects. As for the religious curriculum, it has developed within two pre-school levels: in mosques, scholarly houses and houses of science on one hand, and in schools on the other hand. The religious-literary curriculum is considered to be the most common, prevalent and permanent one, since religion is the axis of it and the driving force for paying much attention to education. Furthermore, this curriculum has remained a priority in schools as their curriculum is closely linked to direct religious subjects; for that, this curriculum has been maintained and adopted by schools for two centuries without being combined with other subjects until the second half of the sixth century AH, when the Caliph Al-Mustansir included the study of medicine in the curriculum of Al-Mustansiriya School.

The curriculum is also the image of society since it meets its needs, and evolves with it to keep pace with its growth and development. We can clearly see that in the curriculum of graduate stages, especially “after life has evolved and got much more complicated and sublime on its way to urbanization following the first Abbasid era. Then, the curricula have developed in the second phase, when more in-depth method was followed in studying all types of sciences such as philosophy, speech, beliefs and literature, i.e. poetry, prose, tajweed, calligraphy and fine arts, etc...”(26)

This development of curriculum does not necessarily have to be linked to the educational process with its various stages, as the curricula for both undergraduate and graduate stages are neither related to each other in the educational sense nor complement each other as a single series because there is a huge educational gap that makes it so difficult to find a linking point that would allow the educational process to take place spontaneously or gradually; so, children may enter the school without being able to find a direct link between their education at Koranic schools and the later stages of their education in other places due to the absence of exams, certificates or the division of educational process into specific stages.

III. The Subjects

The subjects are those contents that the student receives from his teacher



through various ways, and which aims to provide him with all kinds of knowledge and information in different fields. “The subjects must be closely linked to external life; as subjects should not be separated from their vital and social circumstances” (27). And this is because there is a direct relationship between the subjects that the student receives and the life he is being prepared for; they are basically based on the individual’s needs to be equipped with all kinds of knowledge that would prepare him for external life.

As for Arabs, the curricula of graduate studies included sciences that were consistent with some books that were adopted by teachers as a basis for the division of these sciences. Al-Farabi divided them into five sections:

1. Linguistics and its branches.
2. Logic.
3. Teaching sciences; namely, number and engineering, spectroscopy, astrology and musicology.
4. Natural science and its branches.
5. Civil science and its branches, the science of jurisprudence, and speech science.

Al-Khwarizmi also arranged these sciences within his book, entitled, “**Keys to Sciences**”. He divided these sciences into religious and scientific ones: the science of jurisprudence and its origins, science of grammar, speech science, writing science, and the news science. Other sciences such as natural sciences include medicine, anatomy, pathology, pharmacology, mineralogy, botany, zoology, and chemistry. Whereas mathematical sciences include arithmetic, geometry, music, mechanics, astronomy and logic. Later, the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan Al-Safa) added to these divisions another section which they called the science of theology.

As for Al-Ghazali, he divided sciences into Islamic, and non-Islamic ones; classifying humanities that play critical role in the understanding of religion, Islam, the Koran and science of jurisprudence as Islamic sciences, while he classified the pure sciences such as medicine, engineering and others as non-Islamic sciences.

Preference of one science over the other has alternated and interchanged. Some of them would say: The science of jurisprudence is the most eminent among sciences, while others would argue that it is linguistics which was enriched and influenced by Western schools(29).



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