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APPLYING TAWHID FRAMEWORK TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: PARADIGM FOR SULU EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many Muslims today are victims of miseducation and the impact of secularism spreading like a torrent flowing massively to valley of the society. Secularism is a clear violation of the unity of education and the unity of Allah. It is actually promoting the de-Islamization of Muslim culture and the revolt against Islam. For century already, the Muslim societies all over the world have been detached from divine science due to secular curricula which the colonizers introduced in all schools in the Muslim communities. As a result, the spiritual and moral order have become weaker and weaker which undermines the foundation of the Muslim society.

This paper believes in the *tawhid* framework as effective guide for teaching as well as for curriculum development reflective of the culture and aspirations of the Muslims. The objective of this paper is to draw a practical step of applying the *tawhid* framework as the answer to correct misguidance and ignorance. Methodology of this study is based on descriptive approach using focus group discussion and observation as the principal research instrument.

II. STATE OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM TODAY

Muslim educators around the world are well aware of the secular nature of the school curricula. There are from them who are apprehensive on the future of the Muslim school children for every generation who undergo learning process along the secular ideology. Hence, the study of the *tawhid* framework to curriculum development is significant to promoting the morality and values of the Muslim children. An African scholar mentioned in his article entitled “An Integrated *Tawhidic* Approach to Curriculum” states that Allah should be at the center of the Muslim life but the school curricula are not designed to produce good man with Islamic personality.” (Baba, 1993: 24-26). In the same issue a Malaysian writer in his write up, “Islam as an Alternative National Development” emphasized that curriculum pursued by the Muslims in the contemporary period is mostly tailored on driving away from spiritual advancement and moral discipline. Thus, the stronger is the pursuit of material advancement in the parlance of scientific technology the more weaker and weaker is the spiritual and moral order of the society.” (Kamal, 2000: 5-7)

In a book known as Islamic Education, has explained that training and education for men should be founded in monotheism (*tawhid*) because without this, man and society will always in chaos. Give me just 300 students be trained or educated in Islam and you shall witness an orderly man and society. (Hassan Al-Banna, 1980: 35) Similarly, an Indian *shaykhul hadith* writer in his book, *Fazail-i-Amal* stressed that the current disease in the body of Muslims has sprung from the extinction of the true spirit of Islamic education in their hearts. As a result, real sentiment and love for Islamic education are practically dead in us and our belief

in it has dissipated. Obviously, “when the very source becomes dry, the channel of virtue, good deeds and fine attributes, which can flow from it, are not to be seen any longer. This is exactly what is evident today.” (Zakariyya, 1998: 24-25)

In a Focus Group Discussion or FGD on the issues of school curricula in Sulu, the participants assessed the four education variables such as quality, efficiency, relevance and access. For instance, Sulu is plagued with poor quality education as indicated by lack of school facilities, books, poor management and lack of teachers. Poor quality education means poor students’ performance. Sulu’s educational system in particular is still very far from the national goal of achieving global competitiveness. Logically, if the school performance is poor its efficiency is also poor. The school management fails to motivate and supervise the teachers’ performance over ensuring the attainment of efficiency due to lack of school infrastructures and commitment of the teachers to actively participate in the attainment of quality education. Due to inefficiency of the management, responsiveness of the school to the students’ welfare is also affected. The FGD participants stressed that the school curricula in Sulu are mostly irrelevant to the needs of the Tausug. The schools in Sulu failed to promote and preserve the Tausug values, culture and history. The highlight of the focus group discussion is that the failure of integrating *tawhid* in instruction explains the inefficiency of the management performance and also the teachers’ performance. It is only by making Allah the center of life that the Muslims in general will become effective, committed and responsible people to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the school.

It shows that moral values and orientation are essential in the enhancement of the school performance in general. This is basically the reason why *tawhid* is important tool to become the thrust of education. Only people who have internalized *tawhid* and put it to practice will develop strong moral values and good behaviors. Moral values belong to religious domain. They cannot be invented or created. Moral standards have to follow the teachings of Allah as embodied in the Qur’an and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S.). Thus, the extent of success of education in Sulu today is very poor. The performance of the school compared to the attainment of the goals are irreconcilable. Embracing *tawhid* will certainly help to bridge the gap between performance and goals. The objective of producing good man and God-fearing individual is far from being achieved. The result is the opposite. We have produced many misguided persons. Many individuals have been alienated from Allahu *Subhanahu wa Ta’ala*. We have produced a bunch of confused and miseducated educators.

Based on what is going on with the Sulu’s education system, the extent of the success of our educational thrust is inarguably very poor. The schools in Sulu have not produced competent and skilled graduates needed for our society. The first lesson is that every educator should realize the importance of concentrating to attain the three thrusts of education – teaching of right knowledge to include the knowledge of *tawhid*, relevant skills, and Islamic values education.

Islam has instructed all the Muslims with a collective life and has enjoined *tawhid* principles to them, that they should work for peace and prosperity for one another. For instance, they have been told to put unto practical work of action of whatever they learned or knew in Islam, especially in education. Muslims are

prohibited from stepping on the rights of others or to sit between two persons without their permission or to remove anyone from his sitting place. These are among the basic teachings under *tawhid* framework which should be integrated to curriculum development. *Rasulullah* (S.A.S.) said: “A true Muslim is he who does not offend any other Muslim with his tongue and hand, and a true believer is he who does not cause any loss to another believer.” This is the thrust, orientation and content envisioned under *tawhid* framework to curriculum development and if this will be followed as the core concern of curriculum offering in Sulu leadership, quality education, values, good man and quality of good life will be the outcome, *insha* Allah.

III. **TAWHID FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

The *tawhid* framework envisions the liberation of mankind from confusion in knowledge and the evil trap of the *Shaytan*. The unity of knowledge and unity of creation should become the theme of instruction and research. Under this framework, all branches of knowledge are designed to make the people attained the realization of the lordship of Allah. The *tawhid* framework is a guide to formulation of educational policies including curriculum development. It outlines basic principles based on the goals and principles of Islam as follows:

- a. Unity of Allah
- b. Unity of knowledge
- c. Unity of goals
- d. Three-way model approach to human development
- e. Objectives of Islamic education
- f. Promoting Islamic epistemology. Conceptual approach on understanding and application of basic terminologies such as *iman*, *taqwa*, *ihsan*, *ikhlas*, *sabar*, *khayra*, etc.
- g. Realizing work as *ibadah*

Unity of Allah. The idea of unity of Allah establishes the lordship of Allah over His entire creation. That Allah is alone creating and sustaining the universe, that Allah is alone worthy of worship and worthy for asking divine help and that Allah alone possesses all beautiful names and attributes. In nutshell, none has share with Allah in the creation and sustenance of this vast universe. The moment the person worships other beside Allah, he immediately violates the principle of *tawhid* or unity of Allah. The moment the farmer looks for rain as the source of life of his plantation, the principle of unity of Allah is violated and the act is viewed as *shirk* which is a great sin before Allah.

Unity of Knowledge. Islam is the only system emphasizing *tawhid* and the unity of divine and worldly knowledge. It declares one Allah, one book, and one laws for the whole of mankind. All knowledge proceeds from Allah. It is said that Allah sent Messengers, divine books, evidence and intellect in order mankind can stand for justice. Modern science is the product of human intellect which is a gift from Allah and therefore it must be used for justice.

Unity of Goals. The Qur'an states that the purpose of creation of men and *jinn* is to worship Allah. The end of journey is to return to Allah and aspire for Paradise as the lasting place of mankind. Those who believe in the unity or oneness of Allah and save from the hellfire and grant entrance to Paradise, are the successful ones. Indulging in worldly life and neglecting the *akhirat* also violates the unity of goals. Islam emphasizes equally the importance of worldly life and the preparation for the *akhirat*. With his belief, man will become serious in the worship of Allah.

Three-Way Model. According to Dr. Hannbal H. Bara, the framework of Islamic education is aimed for total development of man with emphasis on the development of body, mind and soul. Islam calls for purification of these three elements. Good health or good physical body is the person's most important asset. A healthy body represents 50% of the growth of mind and soul. To take care of the body one should not eat and drink unlawful foods nor indulge too much in food intake and drink. The Qur'an says: "O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy." (2:168) "O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is Him you worship."

Divine knowledge is the food for mind. *Zikr* is the food for heart.

Objectives of Islamic Education. The humanism of *tawhid* framework emerges merely in the condemnation of un-Islamic culture, organizations and institutions, which degrades the Islamic values of humanity. Hence, this framework can be related to curriculum development by giving importance to the objectives of Islamic education. Educators should bear in mind that the objective of Islamic education is the production of good man. Curriculum development should be molded along the concept that Islam aims to create a good man. (Dr. Al-Anwar J. Anzar)

Promoting Islamic Epistemology. Developing and promoting of basic terminologies such as *din*, *iman*, *taqwa*, *ihsan*, *ikhlas*, *sabar*, *khayra*, *tarbiyyah*, *adlun*, *hayat*, *huda*, *hiqma*, *salat*, *zakat*, *hajj*, *shahada*, *jihad*, *ummah*, *khilafa*, *'ilm*, *fiqh*, *shirk*, *kufr*, *nifaaq*, *zulm*, etc. should be given emphasis. According to Ziauddin Zardar, there are hundreds of key concepts that need the attention of the Muslim scholars. They are our basic tools for the elaboration of the world-view of Islam. Epistemology is very important because it is the major operator which transforms the vision of world-view into reality.

Realizing Work as *Ibadah*. Under *tawhid* framework, all righteous works done for the sake of Allah is described as *ibadah* or worship. Teaching knowledge to the students, molding the character of the students, selling honestly in the market, childcare, earning livelihood in accordance with the principles of Islam are all considered worship. Governance in line with the command of Islam is also considered worship before Allah.

IV. APPLYING TAWHID FRAMEWORK

Applying *tawhid* framework to education can ensure the society conforming to true worship of Allah. This framework can prevent the society from falling into misguidance, sins and ignorance.

Example of misguidance in teaching is telling the students about the origin of the universe through big bang theory, telling the students that sovereignty belongs to the state, telling the students about same sex marriage, gay rights, calling usury as interest, etc. Exactly, only *tawhid* framework can correct these misunderstandings.

Shirk is the highest sin before Allah. People who die in the state of *shirk* will not be forgiven by Allah and barred from entering Paradise. Such person will be condemned to hellfire forever. People who worship other than Allah can be likened to spider. The spider builds its own house but the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house. In other words, a person who rely other than Allah will always face instability in their life.

Ignorance is considered *kufr* or disbelief which is also part of the category of big sin. In Islam, any knowledge that will not bring a person to recognize the lordship of Allah is considered ignorance. Beyond Islam is misguidance. The path to worship Allah and success in life is Islam.

V. CONCLUSION

The key to liberate the Muslim societies across the Muslim *Ummah* from confusion and error of knowledge is to promote the *tawhid* framework in teaching as well as for curriculum development reflective of the Islamic philosophy, the Muslim cultures and their aspirations. The objective of this framework is to revive the unity of knowledge and establish the supremacy of the lordship of Allah as the source of knowledge.

At present, the call of the Muslim scholars is the adoption of integrated education through integration of Islam to the curriculum in a secular system or secularism into the Islamic curriculum for the Muslim society. As observed, the school curricula in many Muslim societies today are mostly irrelevant to the needs of the Muslims. The schools generally failed to promote and preserve the Islamic values, culture and history. This failure is the result of no *tawhid* framework in instruction which also explains the inefficiency of the management performance and also the teachers' performance. It is only by making Allah the center of life that the Muslims in general will become effective, committed and responsible people to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the school.

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