



BUILDING ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULA ON THE ETHICAL VALUES AND CULTURE OF DIALOGUE AMONG MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AS A MODEL

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ABSTRACT

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The whole system of education in UAE, Islamic Education inclusive, tends to instill sense of tolerance in the minds of the students. With contemporary happening, UAE seeks to institute this, though it has been there, but this is in order to have culture of tolerance and dialogue rooted in the curricula. There is no doubt that UAE is considered one of the most tolerant and dialogue promoting nations in the world. Through such new Islamic Education curriculum, definitely, there will be revolution in the psyche of young scholars undertaking Islamic studies. It is a firm believe that UAE has so far succeeded and the success will continue. The success of this effort is clearly seen in the lifestyle of students undertaking courses of Islamic knowledge

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and blessing and peace be upon whom He sent as a mercy to the worlds, our master Muhammad peace be upon Him and his family and companions, and those who follow them with righteousness to the Day of Judgment.

Islamic education is one of the pillars of the nation's intellectual and civilization structure. Islam is a divine religion that combines the most important elements of human life: faith and Shari'a. The belief is one of the deeds of the hearts and sharia is one of the practical acts of religious, ideological and philosophical affiliation.

Islam is a complete system of life which history gave testimony on its righteousness and great impact in bringing together the nation which holds on to it and works with its injunctions and embraced its political, social and intellectual liberalization and raising and leading the world at the time, and nothing will mend the Islamic nation except that which mended the first generation. What affected Muslims in the later ages of humiliation, insignificance, disunity and disharmony which are all due to abandonment of Islam and its legislation and work with that which is formulated by humans pursuing their whims and what they thought would enable them achieve their interests and desires.

There is no doubt that the curriculum is one of the important factors in preserving the identity of the nation by transferring its heritage from the predecessor to the successor with high dependability, while providing the appropriate opportunity to purge it of the impurities that have been incorporated during multiple transfer operations, because of the exaggeration at times to maximize heritage, and negligence and belittlement of its authority at other times.

Due to the importance of this topic, I chose this paper titled: "**Building Islamic Education Curricula on the Ethical Values and Culture of Dialogue among Multicultural Societies, United Arab Emirates as a Model**".

In view of the importance of the proposal, I chose this important and valuable discuss for two reasons: first, the seriousness of the subject and its importance; the second is the fierce campaign against the Arab and Islamic world in the fields of curricula at different levels and levels of Islamic educational system in particular.

Therefore, the paper will discuss the issue of building Islamic education curricula on the basis of education and ethics among multicultural societies, and as a model I took the UAE.

Here I pose the following problem: What is the most appropriate curriculum in the teaching of Islamic education in multicultural societies?

And the other problem: Are our modern curricula sufficient to be used in our schools, institutes and universities or is it necessary to be reviewed and discussed?

To answer these problems and queries, I will use the inductive analytical descriptive approach to demonstrate the need to develop appropriate curricula for multicultural societies and trends. The research ends with a focus on the most important findings and recommendations that are recommended for the advancement and development of flexible curricula suitable for the aspirations of the 21st century.

Provision of Education which entails curriculum of teaching in UAE commenced almost immediately the federation was established. Since that time, UAE recorded advancement in terms of literacy rates. It works on improving its youths' literacy which is part and parcel of 2021 agenda.

Presently, the UAE annual budget to Education is approximately 25% of its total budget; hence the achievement of more than 90% literacy rate.

In the year 2006, the United Nations (UN) program on governance in the Arab peninsula, placed UAE at .79 mark on its Index of Education. This program defines index as “one of the three indices on which the human development indicator or index is designed. The index is based on the literacy rate among adults as well as enrolment rate for primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institution.”²

The country is working so hard to achieve global ranking that will place it shoulder-to-shoulder with the most advanced nation. Hence, this brings us to the subject matter of our discussion as the Islamic courses taught in schools are part and parcel of this project that involves both revolution in academic industry and evolution of systems which entail curricula that is expected to midwife the birth of that dreamland. Already efforts are advanced to in recent years by the authorities to develop Islamic Education curriculum that will train students with focus on tolerance and dialogue. This effort is emphasized by the dynamic nature of Islam.

It is noteworthy that Islamic Education already has a system of training its faithful with ample tolerance towards diversities, opening doors of dialogues as the need arises as well as extending the hands of friendship to the people of other cultures. So reviewing the Islamic Education curriculum at this very material time is a clear manifestation that Islam is dynamic; the present world is the one that is in dire need of tolerance and dialogue among different cultures. Thus, Islam is offering this opportunity because these qualities are an integral part of it. Thereby, introducing the Muslim youths who are students of Islamic studies (and even other disciplines) to these important issues so that the humanity could be able to appreciate the diversity and know the best way ever to tackle issues in the situation of misunderstandings. This best way ever is Tolerance and Dialogue.

UAE works so hard to achieve a solidly world class education system. Despite not being among the highest rated on the Education Index, the UAE has made regionally significant achievements in ensuring women’s access to education. UNDP’s Millennium Development Goal No. 3, to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women” has reached its targeted levels of female participation in primary education and continues to increase.³ (See Women in the United Arab Emirates)

Despite not being rated high on the UN Education Index, still UAE has made a giant stride regionally in ensuring that women get access to education. This is in line with United Nations Development Program (UNDP)’s millennium development goal number 3: to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”. In this goal, UAE has reached the target level; this is as seen in the girl child participation in education, from primary to tertiary level. This is continue to rise by day.³ (women in United Arab Emirates)

Identifying a constant need for headway, UAE has indeed tried to execute high quality education standards by implementing new initiatives, undertaking new policies and rooting quality achieving programs. In the Middle East, progress in education is limited by insufficient technology as well as up-to-date techniques of instruction and methodology. That is why UAE is inviting ideas from development partners in this area. The idea can come from everywhere, irrespective of its initiator in terms of culture and what have you. This

shows the tolerance character imbued in UAE education system. Emphasizing the significance of “modern curricula with assorted and non-monotonous means of training and evaluation”⁴, UAE launched a vibrant campaign to achieve these⁶.

It will interest everyone to know the following paragraph. This is because it will showcase how vigorously UAE works hand-in-hand with people of other cultures to ensure development of a high quality curriculum with the aim of achieving its goals. The interesting point here is the tolerance which midwifes dialogue as at when needed. This work encompasses Islamic Education as well.

It is in this line, Abu Dhabi Education Council came up with what it called New School Model, which is a critical-thinking based curriculum designed on that of New South Wales. The program came into being in September 2010⁶.

Treating Islamic Education as an entity with high importance, already UAE started developing new curriculum that will suit the present world needs. By 2016, the Ministry of Education officially promulgated a new Islamic Education curriculum that focuses on tolerance and dialogue (The National Newspaper; 22nd June, 2016). This is with the aim in making youth shun away extremism and create sense of mutual understanding among cultures in the mind of the learners. As stressed by Mr. Hussain Al Hammadi, the Minister of Education. If you have these mindsets, it means a lot towards embracing culture of dialogue as well as tolerance.

Treatment given to Islamic Education in this sector, it does not mean that students of Islamic Education are the ones prone to violence and/or extremism; nay, it is done with the belief that tolerance and dialogue are an integral part of Islam. This had been showcased by numerous scholars among the predecessors as well as contemporary scholars. Thereby, those points that center on tolerance and dialogue will be given exceptional priority, emphasis will be being laid on them. This is with the view of having them rooted deeply in the psyche of young Islamic scholars. Because they are the ones expected to be mounting pulpit for example and be guiding people; this is because scholars are a light that shines the path for the people to follow. By so doing; it means by redirecting and focusing the mind of only one young Islamic Education scholar towards tolerance and dialogue, it is like redirecting and refocusing the thought of multitudes. That is the premier reason why Islamic Education is treated solely apart from the general approach given to the entire Education Curriculum of the nation.

Another point worthy of note is that, currently the whole globe focuses on Islam and Muslim due to activities of certain elements that project Muslims as being violent and intolerant! People of other faiths and cultures seek to know about Islam and its adherents (Muslims); hence the need to retrace path in the modus operandi of teaching Islamic Education. For sure, Islam is a religion that has its doors of dialogue always opened. Dialogue can only be championed by a person or group if they are tolerant. Hence the tolerance culture of Islam. Such a dual faceted curriculum will surely champion these cultures of both dialogue and tolerance.

Likewise, it is noteworthy, that all Muslims are expected to learn Islam. Meaning even students in disciplines other than Islamic Education also study Islam by learning Qur’an, Sunnah and Islamic jurisprudence. So that is why focus and singular treatment is accorded to Islamic Education as regards curriculum, because it affects all.

The following paragraphs will go down memory lane to show the institutionalized culture of tolerance in the UAE educational system. It will show how UAE adopted many system from other culture and/or collaborated with people of other cultures in ensuring quality and sustainability in its Educational system. Thus:

To meet the students' needs, Abu Dhabi Education council signed agreement with International Baccalaureate Organizations for example with the view to broaden options.^{3,5}

Dubai is a hub for numerous international institutions of higher learning. This includes of many American based universities such as Rochester Institute of Technology and Michigan state university. Many of such institutions are currently situated in Dubai Academic City and Dubai knowledge Village.

A new Islamic education curriculum focusing on tolerance and moderate religious teachings will be taught in schools in this academic. This was contained in a statement made by Ministry of Education UAE.²

Hussain Al Hammadi, Minister of Education, told state news agency that teams of experts with the ministry are working to develop the curricula of all subjects, including Islamic education, for the 2016-2017 academic year¹. He made the remarks while speaking on Tuesday night after an awards ceremony for the second Holy Quran Tahbeer Award. The word tahbeer refers to the melodious recital of the Quran.

The award contributes towards keeping young people away from extremism, Mr Al Hammadi said (The National Newspaper: Ministry of Education to introduce new Islamic curriculum. 22nd June, 2016.

In summary, the whole system of education in UAE, Islamic Education inclusive, tends to instill sense of tolerance in the minds of the students. With contemporary happening, UAE seeks to institute this, though it has been there, but this is in order to have culture of tolerance and dialogue rooted in the curricula. There is no doubt that UAE is considered one of the most tolerant and dialogue promoting nations in the world.

Through such new Islamic Education curriculum, definitely, there will be revolution in the psyche of young scholars undertaking Islamic studies. It is a firm believe that UAE has so far succeeded and the success will continue. The success of this effort is clearly seen in the lifestyle of students undertaking courses of Islamic knowledge.

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Dr. Ahmed Sebihi, is currently working as Associate Professor in Islamic Culture and Social Sciences, Gulf Medical University, Ajman UAE. He is the Chairperson of the Islamic Studies, Islamic Culture and UAE Society, College of Medicine and College of Health Sciences Gulf Medical University, Ajman, UAE. Also he is a researcher, committed teacher and educator. He started his professional career as Chief Editor in an Algerian newspaper "AL-SAMURAH" and AL AQEEDAH before moving into Tunisia to work as a correspondent with "RUSSIKADIA" newspaper. He then relocated to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to assume the role of Director of Media Centre and Public Relations in the High commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina under the patronage of H.H. King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz (May his soul rest in peace). Dr. Ahmed, shifted to academic profession in 2010 as Lecturer in American University in the Emirates (AUE) for almost 5 years and before that in the Canadian University of Dubai (CUD) and Gulf Medical University (GMU), Ajman UAE, the University of Sharjah (UOS), Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (HBMSU), Ajman University of Science and Technology (AUST), University College of Mother and Family Sciences (UCMFS). He developed a great deal of educational, learning, and teaching throughout his long enriching experience. Dr. Ahmed has led a range of workshops for teachers and students in Thailand and in UAE and has many contributions in all levels of educational scale in Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia Malaysia, Thailand and United Arab Emirates.