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INTEGRATED EDUCATION AS A SOLUTION FOR EDUCATIONAL DUALISM FROM SAID NURSI'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the concept of integrated curriculum according to Badiuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) based on his educational model that is Madrasah al-Zahra. This attempts to help in deriving some possible answers as solution of educational dualism facing the Muslim society today. It is a fact that the Ummatic malaise is rooted from educational dualism, co-existence of traditional religious and modern secular systems of education as a negative impact of Western colonialization and secularization. The integration of both traditional religious and modern secular sciences into an integrated curriculum is viewed as the best solution to resolve this critical problem among contemporary Muslim scholars including Said Nursi. His view regarding the concept of integrated curriculum could be elucidated from his Madrasah Zahra model that promotes teaching of positive sciences in religious schools while religious subjects in the secular schools. This to make sure the products of religious education system are preserved from religious intolerance whereas the products of secular one from irreligious ethics. Integrated curriculum represents the epistemological aspect of Islamic education is a great challenge. Nonetheless, Nursi has positively proposed a holistic model of an Islamic University with an integrated knowledge based on Quranic framework and scientific advancements. Nursi's concept of integrated curriculum based on his Madrasah al-Zahra model gives some implications in remodeling Islamic integrated curriculum for Muslim educational institutions in

the effort of resolving Muslim problems and then, reviving Islamic civilization for the betterment of the whole mankind.

Keywords

Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, Risale-i Nur Madrasah al-Zahra, Educational Dualism, Integrated Curriculum, Islamic Education

1. Introduction

It is a matter of fact that the humanity is facing severe crisis of both spiritual and material developments at these present days. Throughout the globe, human being are suffering from hunger, poverty, inferiority complex, depression, handicapped, trauma, misbehavior and many other diseases. These are resulted from others' violence, terrorism, deviant teaching, economic and political instabilities as well as environmental disaster. Notwithstanding, scientific achievements and technological advancements become more sophisticated, this phenomenon become more critical and complicated. Consequently, many Muslim contemporary scholars have strived to derive some possible answers as lasting solutions to all various kind of human problems. Thus, the most prominent Muslim scholar of the time, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) had pioneered and propagated his original views and positive actions based on revelation and faith as sustainable solutions for the betterment of humankind.

This article attempts to examine Said Nursi's thoughts and positive actions regarding the concept of integrated curriculum based on his proposed educational model that is Madrasah al-Zahra in order to derive some possible answers as a practical solution in helping to resolve educational dualism facing the Ummah today. Therefore, the elucidation of Said Nursi's life and his magnum-opus, Risale-i Nur theoretically and practically would be significant.

2. Educational Dualism in Muslim Ummah

In the case of Muslim society, the malaise of Islamic civilization becoming more critical due to negative impact of Western colonialization and secularization. This Ummatic malaise is rooted from educational dualism, co-existence of traditional religious and modern secular systems of education. This has posed a great dilemma to the Muslim Ummah as posited by Rosnani (2004).

This phenomenon had been observed earlier by Nursi (1956) when he manifested explicitly his dissatisfaction with the alternatives presented by both the new secularist

westernizing visionaries and the traditionalists who failed to comprehend the nature of change in all dimensions of Turkish society. Nursi had divided people into two types; the first group is the people of guidance called as Divine party meanwhile the other is the people of misguidance known as Satanic party. Both groups are conflicting each other; the former is so often defeated by the latter. In explaining this phenomenon, Nursi gave his wise answer that the God has given Satanic party some abilities to challenge Divine party. In certain cases, the prophets were often defeated by misguided people. In reality, the latter that are awfully weak sometimes got victory over the former who is actually strong.

According to Marazi (2015), Nursi observed that majority of prophets emerging in Asia whereas majority of philosophers coming from the West. This became a sign of Divine Pre-Determination that Asia has religion and spirit to develop mankind. For him, philosophy and wisdom should complement this religion and spirit and do not replace them. Nursi had confident that the Muslims becoming progressive when applying Islam and becoming backwardness if they slackened off. He claimed that the Western civilization has absence of virtue and guidance but mere lust and passion, enmity and subjugation that has been infiltrated by revolutionary societies and defeated the supremacy of Asian civilization temporarily. Therefore, there is a need for change after the completion of Islam and a room for reformation in all aspects of life including legislation and education. Therefore, Nursi called for educational change in order to correct the human error and ultimately, to gain real happiness.

3. Integrated Curriculum as an Educational Solution

Marazi (2014) claims that Nursi had started earlier promoting the integration of knowledge as a positive action to revive Islamic civilization. Nursi criticized existing institutions and mentalities and attempted to provide an alternative and authentically Islamic and modern approach to meet the current challenges. Further, he analyzes that, as a solution to the cultural divide within and outside the Ottoman Empire and Westernization, which is considered to bring more to Muslim Ummah, Nursi offered the integration of Islam as “umbrella of a common faith” to all Muslims into the advantage of Western technology and knowledge. Consequently, Nursi strived for the reconciliation of modern achievements with Islam, and in contrast to others, he emphasized primarily Islamic learning institutions or known as madrasah. Ali (2014) also mentions that Nursi had developed his own ideas on educational reform and

method of teaching, integrating the religious and modern sciences. Nursi viewed that modern science and logic were the way of the future; hence he advocated that the religious sciences should be taught in secular schools meanwhile the modern sciences ought to be introduced in religious schools (Markham & Pirim 2011). Such integration had been practiced among classical Muslim scholars during the enlightenment period of Islamic civilization (ninth to mid-thirteenth centuries)

Therefore, the integration of knowledge in Islam is not a new phenomenon. It is the idea of harmonization between the two branches of knowledge; known as traditional religious and modern secular that look different but actually complement each other. Muhammad (2014) views that Nursi's thought regarding the integration of religious and scientific knowledge will give an insight into modern knowledge and understanding value of education along with need and necessity of ethical education in order to restructuring the corpse of knowledge on realistic line. This is what Nursi had tried to deliver in his magnum-opus, *Rasail an-Nur*.

4. Madrasah al-Zahra as a Holistic Educational Model

After Nursi observed the eradication of the backwardness of the West by improving the standard of science and learning, he proposed a university with the name of Madrasah al-Zahra and determined the basics of this university including its aim, organization, syllabus, nature, and funding. Correspondingly, it is worth to note that he viewed that education is vital to combat ignorance. But in reality, Muslims had been kept away from understanding the Qur'an and practice its contents. Therefore, his proposal of this educational model to fully support the Quranic teachings. Vahide (1992) explains its establishment is primarily aimed at combining the teaching of the religious sciences and modern sciences. It promotes an integration of religious education and modern science within a single unified system. It emphasizes that modern science and theology will be complementary in order to achieve happiness and welfare in the Muslim societies.

Similarly, Marazi (2015) posits that this model stands for 'integration of knowledge' that heartens religious subjects to be taught in the secular schools (maktabs) and the positive sciences in the religious school (madrasahs). This to make the students of modern secular sciences being preserved from irreligious behavior, meanwhile religious sciences students will be equipped with technological advancement and become more progressive. He further observes that Nursi's

thoughts regarding the integration of science and technology with education are very innovative and meaningful in the educational dilemma for Muslims throughout the globe.

Ali (2011) mentions that Nursi described its aim and nature as likely al-Azhar University which is a universal madrasah as the means of unifying the true and sacred Islamic nationhood that is vital decree of the Qur'an to regard all Muslim believers as brothers. Mufrodi (2014) also remarks that Madrasah al-Zahra becomes a platform to gather scholars of religion and science as well as Sufis where they will be engaging in dialogues and mutual understanding among them. In other words, it is going to unite various kinds of tribes and peoples. Meaning that, it showed that Nursi concerned with the universities and his main focus was the reformation of the education at higher educational level. Nursi had confident that universities have a very significant role to guide intellectual directions for social change. Madrasah al-Zahra project adopts an approach by unifying educational system where that Qur'anic and Physical Sciences to be taught in a merging way. Nursi elucidated further these ideas in his work called Munazarat or Debates from Risale-I Nur (1956/ 2014).

Marazi (2015) claims that Madrasah al-Zahra model has distinguished civilizational characteristics which is most appropriate and customarily practicable model for Muslims in universal worldview. This Nursian model provides an alternative that is meeting the current global needs without neglecting the necessary values that should be infused by education in order to face the incoming challenges of hostility of atheism, epidemic of materialism and plague of naturalism and other harmful ideologies. Further, he views this model is very comprehensive and caters the needs both of religion, science and morality and thus makes beautiful blend of all the three in a holistic manner. This experiment was in consonance with the golden traditions of Islam which were inspiring Muslims from the times of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and were holding promise for the future as well.

5. Discussions on Integrated Curriculum According To Nursi

According to Ali (2011), in empowering integrated education, Nursi has identified several guidelines as reference for Muslims as follows:

- (a) Conducting a comprehensive review of the whole current systems of education in order to revive a sustainable civilization.

- (b) Reviewing critically traditional religious system of education and restructuring entirely its curriculum.
- (c) Unifying the three different systems of education which are traditional religious, modern secular and Islamic spiritualism (Sufism) into an efficient and comprehensive system of education.
- (d) Harmonizing the three main elements of material, spiritual and moral which are necessary in the curriculum of education.
- (e) Practicing three languages or called as “tri-lingual” to be medium of teaching and learning with mandatory for Arabic and more emphasis on native language.
- (f) Assessing Islam to be a source of reference to all types of knowledge, including modern science.
- (g) Promoting the establishment of an Islamic integrated university that implement the real integration of religious and modern sciences.
- (h) Formulating new formulas to develop the new Muslim generation.

Nursi’s educational thoughts on integrated curriculum based on Madrasah al-Zahra model as solutions to educational dualism could be analyzed as follows:

5.1 The Integration of Modern Science and Religious Sciences

Nursi (2004/ 1956) admitted and then attempted to revisit the conventional concept of science by integrating traditional religious and modern physical scientific knowledge. He proposed that religious and physical sciences to be taught simultaneously in an integrated way. In order to affirm his view on integrated curriculum between secular and religious education, Nursi sets out some clear guidance and justified this theoretically:

- a. The light of the conscience is religious sciences (ulum-u diniye).
- b. The light of the mind is positive or modern sciences (funun-u medeniye).
- c. Integrating both manifests the truth.
- d. The development of student’s skill will be enhanced by having both sciences.
- e. If disunited, the religious science will breed superstition.
- f. If disunited, the modern sciences will cause corruption and skepticism.

It could be analyzed that Nursi’s educational thought is an integration of science and educational thoughts. Such integration of curriculum will eliminate conflict as well bring moderation and balance into education system.

5.2 Supremacy of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions

The education system must be based on the last holy book of al-Qur'an and the traditions of the last prophet, the two main sources of teachings in Islam. Nursi (1996/1956) concerned with knowledge based on the love and faith in God as the seed of his educational thoughts. Hence, he advised people to have faith not be in doubtful that will make them sufferings in this world and the Hereafter. Having faith in God by following the teaching of al-Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) will ensure them to get salvation from 'both misery in this world and torment in the Hereafter'(The Flashes / The Thirteenth Flash, p.115). Nursi's main focus was 'ilm al-kalam (theology) as the mechanism of scholarly defense against the threats of rationalistic skepticism. The second was Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) as the mechanism of illuminating Islamic beliefs and principles.

5.3 The Truth Becomes the Ultimate Output of Integrated Knowledge

Nursi (1996/1956) reminded that the biggest challenge facing the Muslims nowadays is the corruption of their hearts and the harm of beliefs due to the misguidance resulted from science and philosophy. The only solution for this problem is light that could reform their hearts and save their belief. Consequently, Nursi identifies two main branches of sciences which are based on human concept that has two main faculties namely:

- (a) The light of heart-spirituality-conscience is it is connected with religious sciences which are destined to avoid fanaticism and superstition.
- (b) The light of brain-mind-intellect and it is related to physical or natural modern sciences which are meant to eliminate skepticism and cunningness.

In sum, the light manifested the truth and becomes guide for hearts and minds that resulted two types of sciences which should be integrated harmoniously.

5.4 The Role of Religion and True Knowledge in Empowering Human Civilization

Nursi (1996/1956) believed in the role of religion in maintaining the survival of a nation. This becomes acceptable universal principle. Muslim should avoid of being in the state of 'doubting unbelief and also irreligious. Nursi believed in Islam as the key guidance of all sciences, and the foremost of all true knowledge.

The true knowledge will bring happiness of this world and the hereafter, and therefore a man came to this world to be equipped with knowledge and hope. Nursi (2010/1956), in his *The Words (al-Kalimat)* views that knowledge without spiritual insight is ignorance, because human

intellects need to absorb religious truth with divine guidance as the mirror is heart not mind. Moreover, for him revealed truth is reasonable, but a mere reason could not obtain it. Nursi views that right knowledge is obtained by pondering the universe in the name of the God but becoming ignorance if attained it in another way. Hence, science provides interpretation of the universe symbolizing the God's creation and manifests the Truth (Nursi, 2010/ 1956). Knowledge based on the Divine Revelation and considering scientific developments will surely bring more benefits than harms (Serdar, 2011). The science should be expressed its discoveries and theoretical formulations in a proper manner. In this current context, Singh & Kumar (2017) assert that the role of knowledge as "an intellectual asset seems to be prominent in creating roadmap toward optimum utilization of the resources, formulating strategies and their effective implementation".

5.5 The Well-Expressed Quranic Language as a Model

Nursi (2010/ 1956) and his 'The Reasonings' (Muhakemat) strongly recommended the Quranic language as a model because this Divine language provides guidance in all domains of human life. He was impressed with the eloquent language of the Qur'an that proves its miraculousness, which could not be found in Greek or Hellenistic philosophy and science. As a book of guidance, the Qur'an has been revealed to be understood by different levels of understanding among human beings who are experts in distinctive disciplines of science. Thus, truths are effectively presented to guide them.

5.6 The Compatibility of Science, Philosophy and Religion

Nursi (1956) approved those sciences as evidence for the existence of Allah. Hence, integration of religion and science becomes mandatory. In terms of education, such integration should become a foundation of all educational aspects and processes. He identifies two sources in seeking the truth namely prophet hood and philosophy. He opined that whenever philosophy is based on religion, both material and spiritual development are necessary in achieving a real civilization.

5.7 The Utilization of Modern Scientific Findings

Nursi (1956) observed all scientific matters from theologian perspective and he successfully explained his approach within the scope of intellectual reasoning. He argued that the Qur'an promotes natural sciences and phenomena. For him, science becomes literalism or gives mere literal meaning when its approach is not associated with the belief in God and denies the

role of religion. The scientific approach should be connected to the power of creator and the Divine effect that will bring signified meaning. This is the correct approach. Nursi (2005/ 1956) advocated that:

We should mold the science brought from Europe and America, which in fact, belongs to Islam, with the light of oneness and view it from the point of view of the contemplation and signified meaning mentioned by the Quran, that is, on behalf of its maker and master.

(The Damascus Sermon, 23)

In this current context, Muslim should adapt wisely the Western scientific achievements not to give total rejection.

According to Marazi (2015), notwithstanding Nursi had realized that modern science having some weaknesses especially dealing with materialism and literalism, he did not reject modern scientific advancement, and conversely, he regards it as a turning point of intelligent efforts in human history. Moreover, Nursi promoted the utilization of modern scientific findings, especially the use of modern innovations in interpreting the religious texts that is useful for renewal of Islamic teaching. Nursi believes that modern science as motivating factor of developing a human civilization in the Western world as well as of reviving Islamic civilization in the Muslim world.

5.8 Islamization of the Modern Science with Islamic Thought

The concept of integration should be translated in the new Quranic exegesis based on modern scientific findings. He put maximum efforts to make it into practice enthusiastically. In his work named “The Reasonings” (Muhakemat), Nursi (1956) explicates the nature and method of Islamizing modern science for the rapid progress of Muslim civilization. Nursi realizes that reason, knowledge and science became significant in this millennium. Without mentioning Allah, a teacher actually tend to acknowledge the existence of Allah through detailed explanations when teaching the nature of every disciplines of sciences such as astronomy, philosophy, economy, physics and chemistry. Nursi proved the interconnectedness among belief and science, and the education.

6. Recommendations

This study suggests some recommendations for the implementation of the Islamic integrated curriculum based Nursian educational model that as follows:

- (a) Both positive modern and religious sciences should be harmonized as an integrated curriculum. The subject matters must cover both types of sciences and be taught accordingly depending on the interests and needs of a learner.
- (b) Religious sciences must be derived from the Qur'anic studies and Islamic principles. The basic religious sciences must be personal obligations (fardh 'ain) for every learner to manage his or her own soul correctly and becoming a good servant of God.
- (c) The positive sciences should fall within the category of collective obligations (fardh kifāyah) to manage the system of life and should be meant for enhancing the quality of living and national building. Positive sciences are related to scientific discoveries and technological advancement such as engineering, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, arts, entrepreneurship, commerce, humanities and so on.
- (d) The positive sciences must be integrated with philosophical knowledge, for such integration would produce optimistic and dynamic professionals who are not materialistic and mechanistic in their behaviour.
- (e) Science should be expressed its scientific discoveries as well as theoretical formulations in the light of Islamic principles. Science must be incorporated into formal curriculum and become a compulsory subject. A misconception about Islam in relation with the 'modern science' must be corrected because there is no dichotomy between modern science and Islamic science. Oftentimes, the 'modern science' nullifies Islamic faith.
- (f) The restoration of philosophy in Islamic education system is vital to enhancing thinking skills among Muslims as well as to the revival of Islamic intellectualism. Rather, this is the only panacea to the intellectual paralysis that has affected the Muslim community. Indeed, philosophy had been taught previously in the Sunni schools of thought for the purpose of the augmentation of rational thinking. The philosophizing method is a tool of learning.
- (g) All subject matters should be interconnected in the context of their essences and substances. The interdependence among them should be established based on tawhidic paradigm based on the unity of Allah, knowledge and humanity. All disciplines of knowledge, which are praiseworthy, are accepted without any distinction between secular or religious types. These disciplines resemble branches of one tree with is rooted in the unity of Allah and knowledge. Every science should contain the value of sacredness and should emphasize the recognition of the existence of the Creator in His Oneness (Tawhīd) and Absoluteness (Mītlāq).

- (h) The Islamic principles and ethics should be embedded across the curriculum and educational activities and processes. The Qur'anic injunctions and messages should be incorporated into all subject matters and contents must be purified from any anti-Islamic ideas like secularism, materialism, atheism, naturalism and other ideologies. Any human-made theories, assumptions and findings should be elucidated in the light of the Islamic worldview.
- (i) The institutions should establish professional development programmes to cultivate the spirit of professionalism, which based on Islamic principles and ethics such as the integration of conventional medical treatment and Islamic spiritual therapy. Such integration would help students to apply Islamic principles and ethics into their professional practice.

7. Conclusion

In summary, Said Nursi's frequent emphasis on the revival of the Ummah and the whole world is through the integrated curriculum of modern secular and traditional religious sciences. It means that the problem of educational dualism should be resolved through this kind of integration where both sciences are complementary. Therefore, it is recommended that an Islamic educational institution which upholds the integrated curriculum as its benchmark should consider the educational model proposed by Nursi in determining its educational philosophy and curricular content. Muslim scholars and policymakers should be responsible for conceptualizing and restructuring the Islamic education system through a proper concept and methods of an integrated curriculum. The Islamic integrated system of education is expected to help in producing professionals with holistic and balanced personality, not mechanistic-materialistic individuals with split personality. So that, they will be able to achieve the true success and real happiness in this worldly life and the hereafter. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop the educational model that has been triggered by Nursi, namely Madrasah Zahra. Faith is the key point to regain the glory of Islam, but the integration of education also has a major role in it.

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