

EDUCATING TEACHER FOR MUALLAF: THE TAWHIDIC BASE (Pendidikan Guru untuk Muallaf: Berasaskan Tauhid)

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to discuss the role of tawhid in developing teacher education system for the muallaf. Basically, every teacher should have good akhlak, since they are generally regarded as the role models or exemplars for their students especially for the muallaf students. These teachers are the persons who directly educate the muallaf about Islam and guide them closely how live as good Muslim. Therefore, in Islam, tawhid is not limited to divine or metaphysical aspects, but it also should be regarded as the universal principle or rule that will guide all human activities in order to confirm to the will of Allah. This primary concept is related to the human being's temporal duty in this universe as khalīfatullāh, and with his or her permanent duty as ʿabdullāh. As a result, education in Islam cannot be separated from the concept of tawhid. Thus, this concept of tawhid should be correctly understood by the teachers particularly in educating our new Muslim brothers and sisters.

Keywords: Tawhid; muallaf; teacher; education.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama makalah ini untuk membincangkan peranan tauhid dalam membangunkan sistem pendidikan guru untuk muallaf. Pada dasarnya, setiap guru perlu mempunyai akhlak yang baik, kerana mereka secara amnya dianggap sebagai

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model atau teladan untuk pelajar-pelajar; terutamanya bagi pelajar mualaf. Guru-guru adalah orang yang secara langsung mendidik mualaf mengenai Islam dan membimbing mereka dengan teliti bagaimana untuk hidup sebagai Muslim yang baik. Oleh itu, dalam Islam, tauhid tidak terhad kepada aspek ketuhanan atau metafizik, tetapi ia melibatkan aspek prinsip sejagat atau peraturan yang akan membimbing segala aktiviti manusia supaya patuh dengan kehendak Allah. Konsep utama ini berkait rapat dengan tugas manusia di dunia iaitu menjadi khalīfatullāh bersama dengan tugas tetap manusia sebagai 'abdullah. Sebagai kesimpulan, pendidikan dalam Islam tidak boleh dipisahkan daripada konsep tauhid. Oleh itu, konsep tauhid perlu difahami dengan betul oleh guru terutamanya dalam mendidik golongan saudara baru Islam.

Kata kunci: Tauhid; mualaf; guru; pendidikan.

INTRODUCTION

The development of teacher is one of the most key aspects in the implementation of any educational system. Based on challenges today, all teachers should be trained professionally and equipped with the latest skills and current knowledge. They must be comprehensively nurtured, particularly in terms of their *akhlak* and inner human development. Based on the significant roles of teachers today, it is important that they have the criteria of good teachers who possess high levels of professionalism based on Islamic ethics especially in educating a large number of our new Muslim brothers and sisters in Malaysia.

THE CONCEPT OF *TAWHID* AND EDUCATION IN ISLAM

The term *tawhid* is one of the fundamental terms of Islamic teaching, meaning the conviction and witnessing that “There is no god but God Allah”. Basically, this concept of monotheism is the starting point of Islam and also the differentiation between a believer and non-believer. This primary importance is the only reason why a person is considered as a Muslim. Therefore, the Islamic education system should direct the whole process of the growth of Muslims to belief in Allah as well as to achieve prosperity in this world and the hereafter. Khurshid Ahmad (1967) has insisted that:

They students should be taught the meaning and purpose of life, man’s position in the world, the doctrines of *Tawhid* (unity of God), *Risalah* (Prophethood), *Akhirah* (Life Hereafter) and their bearing upon individual and social life, the Islamic values of morality, the nature and content of Islamic culture, and the obligation, and the mission of a Muslim.

Thus, the purpose and process of education in Islam are a reflection of the Islamic world-view of the role of the human being as *khalīfatullāh*, as well as *‘abdullāh* and which also has significant relation to the concept of *tawhidic*. In the same vein, Ashraf (1994) has asserted that the intention of the process of education in Islam is “... the attainment of the status of a true representative of God on the earth (*khalīfatullāh*)”.

This fundamental concept is measured as the kernel and heart of Islamic faith and teaching, from which flows other important aspects of human life. In other words, *tawhid* is not limited to divine or metaphysical aspects, but it should be regarded as a universal principle or rule that guides all human activities in order to conform to the will of Allah. This central thought of Islam has inspired al-Faruqi (1992), who made an attempt to explain and discuss its significance in his book, *al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*. It is also clear that the ramifications of *tawhid* can be recognized from the two words, i.e. *‘abdullāh* and *khalīfatullāh*.

Indeed, human beings have two interrelated duties that are significantly related to the concept of *tawhid*, i.e., that of *khalīfatullāh* and *‘abdullāh*. In fulfilling his or her duty as a temporal *khalīfatullāh* and permanent *‘abdullāh*, there are certain ethical principles and rules provided by Allah through the Quran and Allah’s Prophet (pbuh) that should be followed. Every human being, who is a servant of God as well as a vicegerent of Allah in the world, has certain moral obligations to accomplish. Al-Faruqi also has mentioned, “...the divine trust is the fulfillment of the ethical part of the divine will, whose very nature requires that it be realised in freedom, and man is the only creature capable of doing so” (al-Faruqi and Lois al-Faruqi 1986). Their role as *khalīfatullāh* as well as *‘abdullāh*, therefore, should be rightly understood by all Muslims. Mohd Kamal Hassan (1995) has stated:

Man is therefore basically a servant (*‘abd*) of God who is entrusted to manage and develop the world in accordance with God’s plan. In that sense he is *khalīfah* (vicegerent) of the Earth ... As vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth and trustee of God, man is directly responsible and accountable to Allah for all his deeds.

Accordingly, all Muslims should follow the guidelines of actions and ethical principles, whether commandment or prohibition, provided by the Creator through His Book and Prophet (pbuh). Since He alone knows what is good for His creations, anything which is permitted by Him is considered suitable for human beings, and whatever is forbidden is damaging for human life. Sa’ad Moustafa (1990) has argued:

The positive commitments essentially act as perpetual reminders and energisers of faith, the continual strong link with The Creator. ...The negative prescriptions are preventive and precautionary measures to

safeguard, maintain the original quality of the human value system, and protect it from degeneration, devaluation, perversion, indecency and temptation.

This is why every single minute of a human's activity is evaluated by Allah. Allah says:

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it, and anyone has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it (al-Zalzalah: 7-8).

Therefore, the main principle of human activities in Islam is that everyone is only responsible for his or her own actions and will be evaluated by Him, as Allah says:

Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. That man can have nothing but what he strives for (al-Najm: 3-39).

Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: nor is thy Lord ever unjust [in the least] to His servants (Fussilat: 46).

Understanding how the concept of *tawhid* is manifested in the daily life of a Muslim, it therefore becomes necessary to simultaneously consider the acquisition of knowledge and the development of faith, which is based on the concept of *tawhid* in the process of education. Husain and Ashraf (1979) have argued that if knowledge is isolated from faith, it becomes:

...not only partial knowledge, it can even be described as a kind of new ignorance. ...Such a person, however extensive his acquaintance with books, has but acquired only a fragmentary view of the universe.

The education system in Islam cannot be separated with the religion of Islam, and the concept of *tawhid* becomes the kernel of its education system. Undoubtedly, there is an integrated relationship between *tawhid*, knowledge, and action, since they complement one another and must not only remain in the individual's intention and mind, but should be interpreted or implemented into real actions. Allah says (al-'Asr:1-3):

By [the Token of] time [through the Ages], verily Man is in loss, except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds, and [join together] in the mutual teaching of truth and of patience and constancy (al-'Asr: 1-3).

Ashraf argued that the faith of Islam, which is based on the concept of *tawhid*, cannot be ignored in the Islamic education system. He has stated:

Faith and knowledge must go hand in hand. Faith is a spiritual gift and knowledge in an intellectual acquisition through the use of man's intellect '*aql*. ...Islam does not allow the Muslims to dichotomize life and divide it into that which belongs to God (Divine) and that which belongs to Caesar (secular). Islam wants education to be a process in which curriculum and teaching methods help each individual to unfold its own unique potentiality as a representative of God on the earth (Ashraf 1988).

Haque (1992) has also mentioned that in Islam, its educational system "...seeks to fuse the spiritual and the material aspects of man's growth and imparts a training which infuses faith into the whole personality, creating a spiritual or religious attachment to Islam. This enables an individual to follow the Quran and the *sunnah* and be governed by the Islamic system of values".

Basically, the strong belief in Allah and the true understanding of the concept of *tawhid* should prevent any Muslim from committing any kind of sin or evil, since he or she realises the punishment and consequence from Allah in the Hereafter. From the Islamic educational point of view, the 'metaphysical authority-divine authority' which is based on the six pillars of *iman*, should restrain any Muslim for doing any kind of badness. That is why it is essential to take the concept of *tawhid* as the foundation of the educational system.

In fact, the negative attitudes particularly among the Muslims are also caused by their negligence towards Islamic teaching, as well as problems in their understanding of *tawhid*. It seems that Muslims have disregarded the 'metaphysical authority' by doing unethical and un-Islamic activities. For example, there are many Muslims who fail to fulfill basic Islamic responsibilities such as the five times daily prayers and fasting, and they are unable to practice Islamic ethical values. Essentially, as Muslims, the belief in the six pillars of *iman* should be manifested through good and right behaviours. However, due to the crisis of '*akidah* or belief in Allah, there are some Muslims who have failed to observe the concept of *tawhid* and have disrespected the teaching of their own religion. Thus, these become major problems for the teachers in explaining the teaching of Islam to our new Muslim brothers and sisters.

As Islam recognizes and respects education as a never-ending process and regards education as an obligation for every Muslim, the understanding of the concept of education is very important, particularly among teachers. As discussed earlier, the principle of monotheism and *tawhid* is regarded as the most important element in

terms of human development, since it is the central or the basic element of the Islamic educational system. In other words, the concept of *tawhīd* is the central issue that must be clearly understood, along with its role in the current Islamic educational system. It is not merely a concept, but also has significant impact on the educational system, which finally should produce a pious servant of Allah.

Education in Islam chiefly aims to develop and nurture students to understand their responsibilities as devoted Muslims who recognise the Islamic ideals of individual and of collective life. Based on the above statements, we may agree that the concept of Islamic education has a close relationship with the Islamic world-view or *Weltanschauung* that focuses on the discussion of the concept of God, the concept of man, the concept of the universe, and Prophethood. The Islamic world-view, which is based on the Islamic concept of *tawhīd*, will, therefore, determine the characteristic of Islamic education. In other words, the whole process of education, according to Islam, must be based on God's principles and the teaching of His Prophet (pbuh). Thus, there is no such division or separation between religious and worldly values and the forms of education must refer to Quranic concepts.

TEACHER AND EDUCATION: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

During the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), we witnessed him as the authentic role model who, through his examples and desirable qualities in every human aspect, especially in the *dakwah* of Islam. Basically, education has a vital relationship with Muslim development; it is useful to look at the role of the teacher as the person who is directly responsible to implement the educational policy and programs. Hashim (1997) has described the role of the Muslim teacher with reference to the ethical term of *adab*, where in her view, a teacher is a *mu'addib*; Rosnani has argued that the teacher is not only concerned with the transmission of skill and knowledge but also "...the inculcation of *adab* which is the discipline of mind, body and soul..." (al-Attas 1979). Jasmi and Tamuri (2012) also have explained that the teacher in Islam has several duties, i.e. as a *murabbī* (trainer of souls), *mu'allim* (transmitter of knowledge), *murshid* (leader in teaching and learning), *mu'addib* (trainer of *akhlak* and personalities), and *mudarris* (effective teacher). As Islam is rooted in the concept of *tawhīd* and faith in God, Prophet, and the Hereafter, the role of teachers in Islam has an ethical and religious involvement and implication.

Thus, Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) is the supreme model or teacher for Muslim teachers, since all his practices were under divine guidance. Khurshid Ahmad (1980) has stated, "To believe in him means to accept his authority as representative of the Supreme Ruler and to follow his example in thought and behavior". Therefore, for Muslim teachers, they must comprehensively examine and experience the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as the Prophet (pbuh) is considered the perfect exemplar

given by Allah for all Muslims. In fact, as an educator, he had practised, demonstrated, and exemplified all aspects that he preached and asked his adherents to follow.

Based on the above discussion, Muslim teachers should have several characteristics such as a correct understanding and deep knowledge of Islamic teaching; a strong belief and clear understanding of the Islamic concept of *tawhid*; an observance of proper *akhlaq* with his Creator, other people, and universe; the acquisition and practise of professional knowledge and skills of teaching and learning; excellent and competent leadership skills; and motivation and positive attitude and thinking.

That is why in Islam, teachers are highly regarded, since they are not only transferring knowledge and information to their students in the process of teaching and learning, but more importantly they are nurturing and developing the students' faith in Islam and the students' inner development towards the balanced growth of the total personality of human being. Thus, it is important to look at the way the concept of *tawhid* significantly influences Muslim teachers.

They also should believe that their duties are regarded as *dakwah* and '*ibadah* to Allah and will be rewarded by Him in the Hereafter. As a result, they will stay away from doing anything that has been prohibited by Allah, since they believe that there is a life after death and punishment from Him based on actions in this world. The teachers will maximize all their efforts in carrying out their responsibilities, since they are evaluated and rewarded not only by their principals but more importantly by their Creator, i.e. Allah. If the teachers really understand that their performances are recognized by Allah, they will carry out their duties and perform sincerely, as they are motivated by the promise of Allah's great rewards.

As a central part of Islamic education system, teachers should be professionally trained through consistent pre-service and in-service training. They should be exposed to more knowledge, wider experience, and better training, to ensure effectiveness in educating our new Muslim brothers and sisters. In producing effective Muslim teachers for the *muallaf*, the concept of *tawhid* should become its foundation. They should also realize that their deeds, efforts, and actions will significantly contribute to the development and betterment of the *ummah*, since the *ummah*'s ideological common ground is based on the concept of *tawhid*. The teachers also realize that all their virtuous activities and contributions are '*ibadah* and *al-'amal al-jariyah*. They also recognize the duty as teacher is an *amanah*. With the right understanding and the proper implementation of the concept of *tawhid* in their daily lives, teachers will ensure that they will fulfill their duties sincerely and successfully. These teachers are the persons who educate the *muallaf* about Islam and guide them closely how live as a Muslim.

Therefore, the concept of *tawhid* should be affirmed several elements in educating our *muallaf* teachers:

1. Ideological foundation of *muallaf* teacher training

The philosophy of *muallaf* teacher education should be re-examined to ensure that the philosophy is in line with concept of *dakwah* in Islam. Thus, the concept of *dakwah* and *jihad* should be seriously considered in the system. They should uphold *tawhid* as their basis of life and activities, which will eliminate other outside or worldly interests that may influence their actions. The ideological basis for teacher education should also be examined. Therefore, the ideal of a teacher in Islam should be referred to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his companions and also great Muslim scholars as the foundation of teacher training program. Halstead (1995), in his analysis on role of teacher in Islamic tradition, has stated that: "...teachers were expected not only to be learned, but also to have a deep personal commitment to faith and to be a living example of virtue and piety which students could unhesitatingly emulate".

2. Aim of *muallaf* teacher education

The aim and objectives of *muallaf* teacher education, particular for Muslim teachers, should be clearly drawn based on the *tawhid* paradigm. The main aim of teacher education is to produce teachers who have belief and devotion to God, knowledge, possession of high moral standards, competence, and responsibility. The teacher trainees who are also the *da'ie* must also have an understanding that they are implementing the *amanah* from Allah and that it is a part of propagating Islam to the *ummah*. Thus, all teachers should be exposed with experience, educated and trained as to ensure effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The emphasis of teacher education, both in pre-service courses and in-service training, are the moral and ethical development, effective teaching methodologies, educational theories and practices as well as latest educational technologies (Hashim 1997; Jasmi and Tamuri 2012). Through right teacher education program, it is hoped that they are professionally trained and equipped with sufficient knowledge and be able to practice the skills which have gained.

3. *Muallaf* teacher education curriculum

The emphasis on the *tawhid* paradigm will ensure that the contents of teacher education curriculum are consistent with the concept of *dakwah*. The *sīrah* of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the context of education must also be critically studied by all *muallaf* teacher trainees. In addition, the western and modern theories of teaching and learning should be examined before they are taught to Muslim teachers. The reconstruction of the *muallaf* teacher education curriculum based on Islamic teaching must include both curriculums of the pre-service courses and the in-service training. The concept of *dakwah* must also be clearly given and understood by the teachers since it is a part of the

central duties of a Muslim. In facing the challenges of globalization, the new *tawhidic* curriculum of teacher education should also educate them to consider themselves as part of the universal Muslim *ummah*. It is because the building of the *ummah* is based on the same doctrine of *tawhid*, which is the root of Islamic brotherhood.

(d) Role of *muallaf* teacher training institution

The government and NGO need to jointly establish training institutions or teacher training centres which mainly focus to train teachers for *muallaf*. In the context of Malaysia, there are only very few informal training centres for *muallaf* teachers. This institutions will also organizes debates, forums, discussions, seminar and workshops and people may be able to freely give their ideas, opinions, and suggestions to improve and strengthen the education for *muallaf*. They could collaborate with local or international higher educational institutions, researchers should more actively carry out studies in planning and integrating the education for *muallaf*.

CONCLUSION

In Islam, education is a process of *tarbiyyah*, which is concerned with the process of developing and nurturing children with positive guidance to be good and perfect human beings. Education is a process of *ta'dīb*, which is the process of developing the individual's social values, responsibilities, and consciousness based on the *sharī'ah*. Furthermore, education is a process of *ta'lim*, which refers the transfer of knowledge through both the divine revelation and human intellect for the purposes of Allah. The role of teachers in educating our new Muslim brothers and sisters not merely has social implications, but also and more importantly, it has religious implications as an *amanah* from Allah, which will be assessed by Him. Therefore, the concept of *tawhid* must be inserted in the four components of the *muallaf* teacher's development, i.e. in the ideological foundation, aim of teacher education, teacher education curriculum, and role of educational institution.

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