ISLAMIZATION OF THE CURRICULUM PROCESS

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Abstract

For many years now, the Muslim UMMAH has remained a victim of incessant westernization, subtle evangelization and aggressive globalization. All these have resulted in either a complete elimination or an instalment bastardization of the Islamic world-view. The values, ethics, ideals, norms and virtues of Islam have become virtually turned up –side –down, with the consequence that very few Muslims actually identify with the principles and practices of their religion. The gradual westernization of Muslims has been achieved partly through the school curricula and partly through the negative impact of the mass media and oral and written literature. The way out of this menace is to Islamize, not only the curriculum design, but indeed the totality of the curriculum process. Technically, this implies that the aims, goals and objectives of the educational system must be Islamized along with the other phases of the curriculum enterprise, including the selection of learning experiences, content, organization and integration of the experiences and content and the final evaluation of each of the identified phases. The connotation of this curricular endeavour is the focus of this paper.

Introduction

The original topic allotted to me was ISLAMIZATION OF CURRICULUM DESIGN. But this had to be modified because of the technicalities involved: In the theory and practice of Curriculum Studies, Curriculum Design is just one phase of the curriculum process. In some curriculum models, it is the fourth phase of the curriculum process followed by a final phase to make a total of five phases of the curriculum process. This is true of Wheeler's curriculum model of 1967. Alternatively, Curriculum Design may be the third phase of the curriculum process, followed by a final phase, resulting in a total of four phases of the curriculum process, as in Tyler's (1949) and Kerr's (1968) models. There are many other models all of which treats Curriculum Design as just one of the phases of the curriculum process.

Given the need for a total, rather than a partial Islamization of the curriculum, this writer feels, very strongly, that the whole CURRICULUM PROCESS, rather than just the DESIGN component should be Islamized. Hence, the justification for the modification effected in the original topic.

At this juncture, it should be emphasized that the task of Islamizing a curriculum process is not a one man's affair. Indeed, it is an elaborate, cooperative, collective and properly coordinated exercise. Ideally, it involves stakeholders whose contributions are required at one point or the other. Such stakeholders include curriculum experts, subject specialists, educational psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, historians, administrators, students, teachers, parents, the ministry of education, syllabus designers, textbook writers, and a host of other concerned individuals and groups with a good understanding of what a curriculum is.

The Meaning of Curriculum

The import of the curriculum, in any worthwhile educational programme, can hardly be overstressed. It is one of the sources of national and international advancement and a veritable instrument for the intellectual, spiritual, social-cultural, political, economic and physical development of a society. This is actualized through the various insights given by the curriculum into what to teach, how to teach, when to teach, whom to teach, why the teaching and how to measure the effect of teaching. In a nutshell, the curriculum is the totality of the planned experiences "offered to the learner under the guidance of the school" (Wheeler, 1967, p.11). These experiences include those offered within the school's programmes of academic studies, programmes of activities and programmes of guidance (Ughamadu, 1992; Gbamanja, 1997).

There are several other definitions of the curriculum, but rather than going through each one of them, the major phases of the curriculum process shall be considered here. This approach has the merit of brevity and an eventual discussion of some definitions captured within the phases of the curriculum process.

The Phases of the Curriculum Process

The curriculum process is said to consist of five major phases:
1. The selection of aims, goals and objectives. This should be preceded by a preliminary phase of learners' NEEDS ANALYSIS
2. The selection of learning experiences capable of attaining the spelt-out aims, goals and objectives.
3. The selection of content or subject matter through which specific types of learning experiences could be offered.

4.   The organization and integration of learning experiences and content. This is the phase that is technically, known as CURRICULUM DESIGN.
5.   Evaluation of the effectiveness of all aspects of phases 2, 3 and 4 in attaining the aims, goals and objectives detailed in phase 1 of the curriculum process (Wheeler, 1967, p.30).

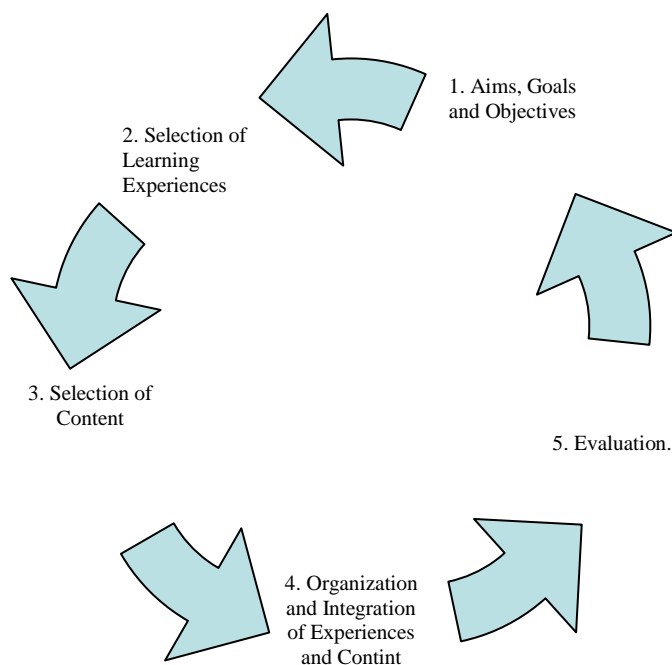The above phases of the curriculum process are represented in Figure 1.

1. Aims, Goals and Objectives

2. Selection of Learning Experiences

3. Selection of Content

5. Evaluation.

4. Organization and Integration of Experiences and Contint

Figure 1.

Modified version of Wheeler's (1967) Model of the Curriculum Process

The selection of Aims, Goals and Objectives

Technically speaking, curriculum experts differentiate among educational aims, goals and objectives: aims are defined as educational purposes which are general, visionary and ultimate; goals are educational purposes which are less general, less visionary and intermediate; objectives are educational purposes which are specific, concrete, measurable and immediate. In other words, aims are long-term educational purposes, achievable at the end of the educational process; goals are intermediate educational purposes, achievable in the course of the educational process; while objectives are short-term educational purposes, attainable immediately at the classroom level, particularly at the end of a particular lesson.

Our review of the relevant literature shows that Muslim scholars share almost the same vision in respect of the ultimate aim of Islamic Education, but this has been stated in different ways. The following aims of Islamic Education have been sampled from the various literature reviewed:
(i)   The aim of education in Islam is to produce a good man (al-Attas, 1977, p.1).
(ii)   The aim of Muslim education is the creation of the good and righteous man who worships Allah in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the Sharia (Islamic Law) and employs it to subserve his faith" (Jamjoom, 1977, p. v).

(iii) Education must achieve two things: First it must enable man to understand his Lord so that he worships Him in full conviction of His Oneness, observes the rituals and abides by the Sharia and the Divine injuctions. Secondly, it must enable him to understand the ways of Allah in the universe, explore the earth, and use all that Allah has created to protect faith and reinforce His religion (Jamjoom, 1977, p.vi).

(iv) In Islamic education, the general aim is to build up the individual who will act as Allah's KHALIFAH or at least put him on the path that leads to such an end. The main concern of Allah's KHALIFAH is to believe in Allah and subject himself completely to Him (Abdullahi, (ND), p.116).

(v) The ultimate aim of Muslim Education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large (Ashraf, 1985, p.4).

In addition to the above quotations, Adebayo (2005), upholds Sarwar's (1996) six item Islamic Education purposes as the aims of education for Model Nursery Schools in Nigeria. The items border, among other aims, on preparing and training "the future generation to work as agents of Allah on earth" (Sarwar, 1996, p. 13-14, in Adebayo, 2005, p.10).

The foregoing shows divergent ways of presenting the general aims of education in Islam. As indicated earlier, the task of Islamizing a curriculum is not a one-man affair. It is a collective responsibility that makes it imperative for subject specialists and curriculum experts to come together for brainstorming on a set of harmonized statements of aims, goals and objectives to avoid chaos or an unwieldy presentation of the Islamic perspective.

Selection of Learning Experiences

Learning experiences are activities, orientations, exposures, etc., designed for learners to facilitate positive changes in their behaviours, and to ensure that expected positive learning eventually takes place in them at the end of a specific experience. Learning experiences could be in form of lectures, discussions, debates, interactive sessions, questions and answers, assignments, home works, projects, field trips, story telling, excursions, demonstration, exercises, and production of specific material determined by the nature of the desired learning outcome . Some learning activities in which learners could engage to bring about learning include reading, summarizing, reporting, exploring, experimenting, investigating, collecting, examining, constructing, drawing, painting, playing, etc.

In the context of this presentation, learning experiences and activities should be planned to reflect Islamic values, ideals, virtues, concepts, etc. The teacher has the responsibility of organizing the learning environment in a way that will facilitate learners' interaction with individuals, groups and objects, resulting eventually in the intended learning outcomes. He also has the responsibility of emphasizing experiences and activities targeted at the Islamic concepts of KHILAFAH, 'IBADAH, 'IMAN, TAQWA, 'AMANAH, 'ISLAM, QIYAMAH, QADAR, SALAT, ZAKAT, HAJJ, SAWM, MALA'IKAH, RASUL, QUR'AN, SALAM, etc. Again all these are to be accomplished through a cooperative approach involving subject specialists and curriculum experts.

The criteria for the selection of learning experiences are that they must be valid, varied, relevant to learners' life, suitable, comprehensive, patterned and generated through teacher-pupil participation (Wheeler, 10967, p. 147-177). They must also take cognizance of the spiritual, mental and physical development of learners.

Selection of Content

Content borders on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to be acquired. It has to do with relevant school subjects through which educational aims, goals and objectives could be achieved. It includes subject matters, topics, teaching methodologies, teachers and their academic and professional qualifications, unit planning, schemes of work, syllabi, lesson plans and lesson notes. Within the context of this presentation, the content of the curriculum must represent knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, subjects, disciplines, subject matters and topics that are representative of Islamic thought, theories and practices. The conditions that must be satisfied in respect of the selection of content are that it must be valid, significant, satisfy the needs and interest of the learner and the society, useful, learnable and consistent with social realities (Wheeler, 1967, pp.178-229).

Again, the onus is on the various subject specialists, curriculum experts and classroom teachers to decide on which content should be selected for the attainment of the educational aims, goals and objectives articulated at the first phase of the curriculum process. And again, the selected content must not loose sight of the learner's spiritual, intellectual and psychomotor development. For example, subject specialists need to collaborate with curriculum experts and classroom teachers to Islamize the learning experiences and the corresponding content of the following selected areas of specialization with their respective and distinctive school subject breakdowns: Agriculture, Arts, Business and Social Sciences, Communication and Information Sciences, Education, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences, Law, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Pure Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, etc.

Organization and Integration of Learning Experiences and Content: Curriculum Design.

The Curriculum Design proper is actualized at this fourth phase of the Curriculum Process. It is at this stage that a particular organizational structure is adapted for the implementation of the curriculum: it is the phase of the Curriculum Process at which learning experiences are integrated into relevant subjects or disciplines and organized for presentation to learners. At this stage, learners are exposed to the selected portion of the cultural heritage with classroom teachers serving as facilitators. Here, the learning experiences expressed in form of content are sequenced with the intention of instilling appropriate spiritual, mental and physical behaviours in learners. This phase of the curriculum process is also concerned with the vertical and horizontal organization, integration and presentation of the learning experiences and content to learners.
This is, respectively, about the year-to-year sequencing of the same curriculum content as well as the arrangement or structuring of different content within the same year or class. In other words, the curriculum design is also about how much of the depth and breath of a content should be offered to learners. It is about the scope of the knowledge to be transmitted, its sequence, continuity, and integration.

Moreover, many curriculum designs abound for the implementation of the selected content. However, only four major and common designs are chosen for the purpose of this presentation: the Subject Curriculum Design; the Broadfield Curriculum Design; the Core Curriculum Design/Organization; the Learner-Centred Curriculum Design.

(i) The Subject Centred Curriculum Design/Organization: In this design, the integrated learning experiences and content are presented as separate school subjects or disciplines. Typical examples of subject centred curriculum designs are organized branches of knowledge compartmentalized into distinct disciplines or subjects like: TAFSIR, HADITH, TAWHID, TAJWID, SIRAH FIQH; SHARIAH; NAHW; SARF;

BALAGAH; ADAB; TARIKH; BIOLOGY; CHEMISTRY; MATHEMATICS; PHYSICS; ANATOMY; PHYSIOLOGY; POETRY; LAW; ACCOUNTING; GEOLOGY; HISTORY; etc. Subject specialists, curriculum experts and classroom implementers have a primary role to play in determining the content of these subjects, their vertical and horizontal organizations, their sequence, continuity, scope and integration.

(ii)   The Broadfield Curriculum Design/Organization: In this curriculum design, two or more disciplines are fused or merged to minimize compartmentalization of knowledge and promote a holistic approach to the presentation of the human cultural heritage, intellectual achievements and science and technology breakthrough.   Examples of Broadfield Designs include Islamic Studies which captures more than one area of specialization, including some of the ones listed above; Social Studies which embraces History, Government, Civics, Geography, Economics, Sociology, etc.; Integrated Science, including Agricultural Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics; Language Arts, embracing Spelling, Reading, Composition, Creative Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary, etc.   Again, the subject specialists, curriculum experts and professional teachers have to participate effectively in the decisions-making process.

(iii)   The Core Curriculum Design/Organization: The Core Curriculum Design deals with subjects, disciplines or courses that are required of all learners regardless of their areas of specialization. They are courses which must not only be offered by all students, but must also be passed. Examples of the Core Curriculum may include Arabic, Qur'an and Hadith, offered as core courses at an Islamic oriented Educational Institution; English, Mathematics and any one of the Nigerian Languages, offered as core subjects, at the secondary educational level in Nigeria; and General Studies Education and the Entrepreneurship related courses offered as core at the tertiary educational level. In all these, curriculum experts, subject specialists and professional teachers have vital role to play in determining which particular course or courses should be designated as a core.

(iv)   The Learner-Centred Curriculum Design: In this curriculum design, the content and learning experiences presented to learners are determined by the needs, interests, abilities and life experiences of learners themselves. In fact, they are allowed to take part in the selection of expected educational goals, content, learning experiences, learning materials, instructional methods and evaluation of their learning. The design is also known as the Activity/Experience Curriculum Design because of its emphasis on the need to involve learners in various learning activities based on the conviction that:

> People learn only when they experience. Only that learning which is related to active purposes and is rooted in experience translates itself into behaviour changes. Children learn best, those things that are attached to solving actual problems, that help them in meeting real needs or that connect with some active interest. Learning in its true sense, is an active translation (Taba, 1962, in Ughamadu, 1992, p. 110)

In practical terms, this design has enjoyed little or no patronage because teachers are not trained to implement it; it makes heavy demands upon teachers to keep abreast of learners' motivations, needs and interest; and because it does not favour the prevailing orientation about school examinations, which makes it unpopular in many schools (Omoniyi, 2000, p.62).

The way out of the weaknesses of this design shall be addressed under the conclusions and recommendations. With the organization and integration of learning experiences and content dealt with, the next thing is to proceed to the final phase of the curriculum process, which is Evaluation.

(v)   Evaluation:

Evaluation is the last phase of the curriculum process. At this stage, the Islamized educational aims, goals and objectives articulated at the initial phase of the whole exercise are assessed and evaluated to determine the extent of their attainment. These educational purposes border on beliefs, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, virtues, competencies,etc The uppermost questions border on each of the phases preceding evaluation:

(i)   Have learners acquired the above educational purposes and to what extent?

(ii)   Were the learning experiences suitable for the attainment of the educational goals? What alternative learning experiences could achieve better result in the light of current behavioural outcomes?

(iii)   Was the selected content effective? What alternative content could have been more effective, given current behavioural outcomes?

(iv)   Was the organization and integration of learning experiences and content effective? What alternative curricular organizational structure could have been more effective in the light of current behavioural outcomes?

For effective measurement, assessment and evaluation of learners' behavioural outcomes, it is essential, from the onset, that learners' INITIAL BEHAVIOUR, before they were exposed to the learning experiences should be determined. Then, the ACTUAL BEHAVIOUR resulting from their exposure to the learning experiences must be determined. Finally, the INTENDED BEHAVIOUR articulated at the first phase of the curriculum process must be determined. It is only through this assessment at the three specified levels that genuine change in learners' behaviour could be effectively established.

The next section deals with the conclusions and recommendations of this presentation.

Conclusion:

The foregoing has taken us through the Islamization of the Curriculum Process. It is clear from our submissions that all that could be done at this stage of the Islamization Project in the South West, and in an individual paper like this, is to provide general guidelines that could provide insights for future cooperative and collective action. For one thing, the Islamization of the Curriculum Process is more than a one man's enterprise. It is in view of this observation that the following recommendations are made for consideration and further brainstorming and action:

Recommendations:

1. Relevant committees should be set up to look at the Islamization of the Curriculum Process for different school subjects or disciplines: the Natural Sciences; Applied Sciences; Social Sciences; Humanities and Arts. etc

2. Members of the Committees should include, among other professionals, curriculum experts, subject specialists, classroom implementers, Muslim Scholars, etc.

3. The committees should address a specific educational level at a time.

4. It is important that the committees harmonize the general aims of Islamic Education. This is to ensure uniformity and to avoid the current unwieldy presentation of the aims. Similar harmonization exercise is required for many Islamic concepts and for the selection of relevant goals and objectives, relevant learning experiences, content, organization and integration and evaluation.

5. The committees should look, among other things, into the publication of relevant textbooks for the various school disciplines, determine the appropriate academic and professional qualifications of teachers and make relevant recommendations in respect of modern instructional technology and modern methods of teaching, etc.

6. The Subject-Centred Curriculum Design should be adopted, in principle, for the Islamization of the curriculum design of the various school subjects. However, the positive dimensions of the Broadfield, Learner-Centred and the Core Curricula Designs should be integrated to enrich the adopted design.
7. It is desirable that individuals involved in the Islamization Project in the South-West should be widely exposed to the various literature on Islamization and should participate in relevant interactive and brainstorming sessions as the project proceeds.
8. This kind of seminar, on Islamization of Knowledge, should not be allowed to suffer the fate of similar attempts in the past: it should rather be a continuous process to which all Muslims should be sincerely committed.
9. Adequate financial resources should be provided to fund the Islamization of Knowledge Project in the South-West.

When these and other relevant recommendations are critically examined and considered for necessary action, the way world have been paved for effective Islamization of the Curriculum Process.

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