

Al-Faruqi's Fundamental Ideas and Philosophy of Education

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Abstract

This paper discusses the fundamental ideal and philosophy of education advocated by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986) in realizing the Islamization of knowledge (IOK) project. The concept and perspective of education projected by al-Faruqi was constructed on the worldview of tawhid that reflected the essence and intrinsic philosophy and paradigm of knowledge rooted on Islamic vision of reality and truth. It embodied the comprehensive and holistic vision of education that seeks to integrate the fundamental element of revealed and acquired knowledge. The project envisaged to undertake significant reform in the practice and

method of education of the ummah that need to be recast and reproject based on the intrinsic value and paradigm of the Qur'an and its approach to knowledge. This paper will analyse this significant idea and principle and its importance in realizing the IOK vision and reforming the educational system in the Muslim world.

Keywords: Al-Faruqi, Islamic education, Islamization of knowledge, Islamization of curriculum, IIT.

A. Introduction

This paper investigates the key ideas and principle of education as advocated by al-Faruqi that envisaged to reconstruct and reformulated the philosophy and methods of knowledge based on the tawhidic principle and unified paradigm of knowledge. The idea was envisioned in his principle works such as *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* and *Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective* that outlined the comprehensive work plan for Islamization of Knowledge and set forth its dynamic challenges and prospects. It brings forth the holistic perspective of education and developed its ethical construct based on the tawhidic principle and worldview. It strived to developed progressive ideas and framework of education that advocated tawhidic values and ideal deriving from divine inspiration and reason and rational views and scientific outlook.

B. Al-Faruqi's Educational Philosophy

The philosophy of education advocated by al-Faruqi was derived from the ideal of the Qur'an and Sunnah reflecting the core and the essence of Islamic worldview that constituted its paradigm and outlook on the nature of education. The essence of this idea was articulated in his work *The Hijrah: The Necessity of Its Iqamat or Vergegenwartigung* that set forth the meaning of education and projected its major ideal and value. His philosophy of education and its principle ideal was formed of tawhidic weltanschauung that provide significant concept and framework and central meaning for education, as envisioned by Islam: "By "education," we do not mean the Western secular systems in Muslim states, which are instituted and managed by the governments of the land. Nor do we mean either the system of private schools and colleges which are nationally owned and operated by nationals of the state or foreign agencies, whether private or public, Islamic or Christian. The Islamic state we hope for is not born out of either system of education." (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

He contended that: "the ummah possesses an educational resources far more effective, and far more readily available than the facilities offered by either

system. That is the free and popular education of the masses, which the Western institution of "continuing education" approximates, but from which it differs because the latter is not free." (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

The fundamental ideal and philosophy of education advocated by al-Faruqi was basically aspired to provide free education for all that will be continuing and lasting for life. He envisioned an inclusive approach of education that freely embrace all people and mostly operated at mosque at any convenient time. It has no institution, only centred on the instruction of teacher, and his insightful guide. Its philosophy was feasibly and creatively designed intended to develop comprehensive understanding and mastery of the entire corpus of knowledge. The system was unsurpassed in our time destined for intellectual renewal and restoration of ummatic consciousness and realization of Islamic science and knowledge, by projecting a holistic, inclusive education for everyone, affirming their absolute right in the pursuit of knowledge in the free environment and learning process: "elder Muslims may receive it after their college years, and younger Muslims may receive it during their free time, whether in seasonal vacations or every day after their college or school hours. It functions mainly in the mosque; and it may make use of community centers, of school buildings during their empty hours or days, or other meeting places available to the community. Its base is the teacher, neither the classroom and textbook, nor the institution which organizes these into a school. It covers all subject, but only as they touched by Islam, its vision and law. It leads to no degrees and issues no diplomas, but it expects action and watches for concrete results. It gives more than any conventional education. Indeed, it is truly "acculturation" and "socialization." Compared with it, school education is extremely limited in scope, and its effect is equally restricted." (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

In upholding the principle of freedom, al-Faruqi argued that education was the cornerstone and building block of any state and its crucial foundation and prerequisite. Contending that education is the lifeblood of any nation, he emphasized the crucial need of "building the state through education", which entail the effort of "educating the mind, reforming the heart and organizing the arms (*al-arkan*)." (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

This principle aspiration and concept of education advocated by al-Faruqi was rooted on the classic example of Muslim scholarship and its high philosophy and scientific framework, and grounded on its underlying practice and method, that was constructed based on the idea of *al-tabyin*, "to make clearly understood" asserting the right of everyone to acquire knowledge and to be informed and enlightened by Qur'anic revelation. This has been exponentially noted by al-Faruqi: "To distinguish it from ordinary academic education, we shall give it the name of *tabyin*, derived from the verb *bayyana* ("to make clearly understood"), used in the Qur'an in connection with enlightening the people with the divine truths. *Tabyin* is the commandment of God to all (Qur'an 2:160), the special

charge of the prophets (14:4) and the paramount objective of revelation (2:118, 187, 219, 221, 242, 266; 3:118; 4:25, 175, etc.) (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

C. Tawhid as the First Principle that Determined Islamic Philosophy and Framework of Education

The tawhidic principle formed the basic foundation in al-Faruqi's educational framework that emphasized on the value of truth and knowledge. This fundamental idea was projected in his work *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* that extensively outlined the principle and notion of tawhid and set forth an integrated philosophy of education based on the structure and foundation of tawhid and its premises. He argued that tawhid is the basic and unifying principle of Islam that comprises of five principles, duality; ideationality; teleology; the capacity of man and malleability of nature; and responsibility and judgement.

Alluding to the pattern of God in nature, he expounded the fundamental notion of tawhid in the worldview of Islam: "Islam demands of man to search for and understand the pattern of God in nature, not merely those which constitute the natural sciences, but equally those which constitute nature's general order and beauty." (Al-Faruqi, 1982)

He asserted that tawhid stand at the core of Islamic consciousness that defined its fundamental essence and worldview, projected by the transcending values and definitive worldview and concept of oneness or the unicity of God: "In answer to the question, what is Islam, we may then say that Islam is a body of values constituting an ideal realm, a transcendent supernal plenum of value at the center of which stands God." (Al-Faruqi, 1962)

The philosophical construct of tawhid also formed the basic premise in his project of Islamization of modern disciplines based on the underlying principle of the unity of knowledge (which will abolish the dichotomy between 'aqli [acquired] and naqli [revealed] sciences), the unity of life (which will eradicate the distinction that some sciences are value-involved and some are value-free, thus making all the sciences as value loaded) and the unity of history (which will remove the separation of knowledge into individual and social sciences, forming all disciplines that are at the same time humanistic and *Ummati*). (Al-Faruqi, 1982)

D. Al-Faruqi's Impact in the Tradition of IIIT

The policy and framework of education implemented in the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) clearly reflected the ideal and aspiration of al-Faruqi. His lasting influence in the intellectual and educational reform undertook by the Institute, was essentially illustrated by Ibrahim (2013) in his keynote address at the Symposium on "Reform of Higher Education in Muslim Societies" organized by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) on December 9-10, 2013: "In formulating a new prescription for Muslims one can do no better than to echo the calls made in the tradition of the International

Institute of Islamic Thought on the Islamization of knowledge as pioneered by al-Marhum Ismail al-Faruqi.”

The founding of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in 1981 was part of al-Faruqi's significant project to lead unprecedented movement of Islamization of knowledge and advocating modern and progressive Islamic worldview. The constructions of ideas were well articulated through publications and programs of the Institute. The professors and students at IIIT has rigorously taking part in this project and published over 250 books that critically advocate IOK's aspirations and address significant Muslim issues. The basic supports, resources and activities of IIIT and an-extensive library were inspired by al-Faruqi and other founding members of IIIT such as Prof. Dr. Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman, Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, and Dr. Jamal Barzinji, that cater for in-depth study and research at the Institute.

The far-reaching influence of al-Faruqi in the creation of IIIT has brought tremendous impact in the rigorous movement for Islamization of Knowledge's project undertook by the Institute. The Institute embarked on groundbreaking reform in its teaching and research program based on Islamic methodology and principle that aim to bring significant reform and intellectual renewal in the Muslim world.

Al-Faruqi major contribution in the development of the Institute was evident in securing financial support from Saudis government for the construction of IIIT (It was divulged that al-Faruqi had secured \$25 million from the Saudi Islamic Development Bank to establish IIIT). He was also instrumental in gearing significant reform and drafting the constitution and foundational structure of IIIT. This critical role he played clearly demonstrated his aspiration and hope for comprehensive reform of Muslim education.

IIIT strived to wrestle with contemporary challenge and crisis in the Muslim world and the social and intellectual malaise of the ummah that has been intensely cultivated in its tradition and approach. This unprecedented effort to address the Muslim dilemma was convincingly illustrated by Dr Jamal Barzinji, the founding member of the Institute: “The Western cultural and educational onslaught, especially in the fields of human and social sciences, which resulted in leaders and intellectuals in the Muslim world looking towards the West for knowledge, unaware that the body of this secular knowledge was developed out of a world view that is totally alien to the Islamic worldview. Western knowledge reflects Western experiences and is tailored to meet its specific needs in total denial of revelation -as a source of guidance and knowledge-. As a result of this, we find that Muslim intellectuals are torn between Western values and precepts on the one hand, and Islamic beliefs, values and norms on the other. At IIIT, we are convinced that the crisis in the Muslim mind is aggravated in the educational system, borrowed blindly from the West and implemented all over the Muslim world, which is systematically producing graduates who are cultural misfits, indoctrinated in alien values. If we look closely at the state of affairs, we find that

much of the loss of identity and conflict in thought is a result of this dichotomous duality in our educational system. The situation is so critical that the cornerstone in any effort to regain our civilizational intellectual Islamic identity has to be in the Islamization of disciplines in the social sciences.”

In the seminar booklet of the two-day international seminar on ‘Isma‘il Raji Al Faruqi: An Expose of the Legacy of a Mujtahid in the Modern Age’ at the University of Westminster, London, UK, its organizer has eloquently described al-Faruqi’s seminal contribution to Islamic thought and its epistemological reform, outlining his project of intellectual reform, and his initiative to transform Muslim education and effecting structural reform in higher institutions in the Islamic world: “He played a central and ideational role in devising a model for a contemporary Islamic university, making intellectual contributions to curriculum development and designing the research programs of Islamic universities in several countries. Prof. al Faruqi also broke new grounds in establishing university-level Islamic studies programs in the West.” (IIIT, 2010)

In his comprehensive research on the origin of IIIT as “a project of Islamic revivalism” Muslih (2006) discussed in detail the history, development, and characteristic of IIIT’s publications. The emphasized was laid on the influence it brought to modern prospect of educational reform and the revival of Islamic thought. It also examined the crucial issues of Islamization of Knowledge, democratic ideal, the implementation of shariah and Muslim-Christian relation, from the perspectives of IIIT. He also examined al-Faruqi’s instrumental role in the setting up of Islamic universities and higher institutions in the Muslim world. Al-Faruqi’s pamphlet, the highly acclaimed *Islamization of Knowledge* has become the manifesto for Islamic universities that served as major reference in formulating and reconstructing its curriculum, designing its text book and learning pedagogy and framework.

The underlying philosophy and objective of IIIT has been to advocate intellectual revival and reclaiming its cultural memory and scientific legacy in the modern world. The Institute was founded to undertake “the intellectual and methodological reform” in the Muslim world. This was reflected in its progressive tradition to revitalize religious science and reclaim its intellectual legacy based on the IOK framework, as it exponentially asserted: “The International Institute of Islamic Thought is dedicated to the revival and reform of Islamic thought and its methodology in order to enable the Ummah to deal effectively with present challenges, and contribute to the progress of human civilization in ways that will give it a meaning and a direction derived from divine guidance. The realization of such a position will help the Ummah regain its intellectual and cultural identity and re-affirm its presence as a dynamic civilization.” (IIIT, 2010)

A continuous effort of Islamization has been pursued in the international conferences inaugurated by IIIT since 1982. The theme decidedly focuses on

Islamization of Knowledge (IOK), which aim to Islamize the discipline of social science comprising education, economics, psychology, as well as science and technology. The critical role of *maqasid al-shariah* has also been discussed in its One Day Seminar on Imam Al-Shatibi's Thought in September 1996 in Kuala Lumpur.

The Institute has made significant attempt to carry out the Islamization of Knowledge project as advocated by al-Faruqi. This requires the mastering of contemporary fields of knowledge, and to identify the contemporary problems faced by the ummah, and subsequently, from the point of view and perspective of Islam, "enunciates solutions and alternatives to bring the ummah back to the position of glory and excellence." (Al-Faruqi, 1986). Summarizing this attempt, Kalin (2002) outlines al-Faruqi's philosophy of IOK: "Faruqi attempted to articulate an Islamic worldview by fortifying it with rational and scientific arguments. In the latter part of his career, he became more and more concerned with the spiritual aspects of Islam. He advocated a radical Islamization of new knowledge. He recognized that the crisis of the modern world was the crisis of knowledge. And this crisis, al-Faruqi thought, could only be cured via a new synthesis of all knowledge in an Islamic epistemological framework. The 'Islamization of Knowledge' project sought to arouse Muslims to become active participants in intellectual life and contribute to it from an Islamic perspective."

The pioneering works of al-Faruqi formed the principle reference in the tradition of IIIT. Most of his major works have been published by IIIT such as *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (AbuSulayman, 1995), *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Al-Faruqi, 1982), *Toward Islamic English* (Al-Faruqi, 1986), *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order* (Al-Faruqi & Yusuf, 2012), and etc.

He had inspired the progressive outlook of IIIT, sustained by its scientific tradition and rationalism. In its foreword to his work "Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order", the IIIT London Office charted al-Faruqi's defining role and monumental impact for dynamic reform and scientific advanced of the Muslim world: "the legacy of his thought and action continue to inform and impress the discourse on Islam, Islamic reform and its institutions throughout the world."

The methodology for teaching and research was developed based on the significant worldview and paradigm of tawhid as envisioned by al-Faruqi, which reflected the far-reaching theme of Islamic thought and Islamization of Knowledge and the profound aspiration for spiritual and intellectual revival: "The Institute promotes academic research on the methodology and philosophy of various disciplines, and gives special emphasis to the development of Islamic scholarship in contemporary social sciences. The program, which has become known as "Islamization of Knowledge", endeavors to elucidate Islamic concepts that integrate Islamic revealed knowledge with human knowledge and revives Islamic ethical and moral knowledge, through education, teaching and support of

scholarly research. IIIT aspires to conduct courses in order to promote its objective to reform Islamic thought, to bridge the intellectual divide between the Islamic tradition and Western civilization. In its teaching and selection of teachers and courses, IIIT endeavors to promote moderation, inter-faith dialog and good citizenship.” (Al-Faruqi, 1982)

The project of Islamic revivalism has been pursued in the tradition of IIIT in order to realize the fundamental aim of dynamic reform in the Muslim world. In his foreword to the book “Muslim Contributions to World Civilization” which discussed the eminent contribution of Muslim scholars in the “specific fields of knowledge” and to common intellectual heritage, Anas S. Al-Shaykh-Ali articulated this significant endeavors: “The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate sincere and serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. Its programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last twenty four years have resulted in the publication of more than two hundred and fifty titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into several other languages.” (Ahmed, 2005)

To support this positive intellectual endeavor, the professors and students of IIIT had played crucial role to reinforce the structural reform in the program of study it offered that “the Institute has become a forum through which Muslim scholars have rekindled an ongoing debate on Islamic intellectual endeavor and thought” (IIIT, 2010), that has brought unprecedented breakthrough of intellectual progress and development.

E. Educational Breakthrough and Initiatives at the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan

In early 60s, when he was Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies at McGill, al-Faruqi was invited by Dr. I.H. Qureshi, Director of the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan, to join the institute. Pursuing his aspiration for reform, he then decidedly moved to Karachi and taking up the post of Visiting Professor at the Institute from 1961 to 1963 (this was communicated in his letter to Prof. H.A.R. Gibb, dated 22 March, 1963) (Imtiyaz Yusuf, 2012). He initially joined the Institute, with Fazlur Rahman (who was then teaching at McGill), “with the hope of raising the profile of Islamic studies and opening up new directions for it.” (Imtiyaz Yusuf, 2012). During his tenure at the Institute, he has introduced phenomenal and unprecedented ideas for structural reform and enlightened culture by formulating the “Scheme for a Faculty of Islamic Learning at Karachi University” (projected in four main areas: academic jurisdiction; courses of instruction; textbooks; and personnel) and drafted “A Memorandum on Methods of Creating a Modern and Effective Islamic Ideology” envisioning the intellectual project for moral, religious and cultural reform to be implemented by the Institute. But the task of reform was brought to naught since the Institute has not developed the tradition required for resolute pursuit of knowledge and virtue. The serious lack of educational prerequisite was

instrumental in the failure of the reform planning he initiated. This was alluded to in his letter to Professor F.V. Winnett of the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Toronto, Canada, describing the lack of creativity and vitality in the faculty's obsolete curriculum and decadence structure and impossibility of effecting change and genuine reform in Islamic studies:

“Unfortunately, Islamic studies in this country are not serious at all. This, Institute, organized by the Government to be the ‘expert’...[for] the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology, (the body to which all questions of Islamicity of legislation and public action are to be referred under the new constitution), conceives of its duty as that of inviting ‘some’ people to write ‘some’ books on Islam. It has neither the will nor the desire to put its work on any kind of academic footing. For a year and a half now, all efforts to give the Institute an academic program have been to no avail. I am therefore planning not to renew my tenure when it expires this summer and hope to return to Canada.” (Yusuf, 2012).

After two years of teaching at the Institute, he decided to move to Canada and find new place and forum for educational reform and intellectual movement, since the academic life in Karachi lack the vision he aspired for creating viable Islamic thought, and it has not pursued the ideal he projected. In his letter to Dr. Myron Bement Smith, Chairman of the Committee for Islamic Culture, Washington, DC, he explicitly express this concern of the deplorable situation in Pakistan:

“I have come to Pakistan under the impression that the Central Institute of Islamic Research is a fresh and serious attempt to put Islamic scholarship in Pakistan on a sound footing. The fact is, however, otherwise; and I do not think it is to my academic advantage to prolong my stay further. This may sound disillusioning for the hope and prayers you were kind enough to express in your letter. But there seems to be a fixation in the minds of Islamists here that ‘Islamic scholarship’ consists not in reading, in analyzing and in making sense out of collected data, but in writing ‘books’ on Islam in extempore fashion. This has been the weakness of so many other institutions here, and it appears that our Institute is still far from pulling itself free from it. I have been struggling in vain to incept an academic curriculum. Training here in Islamics does not mean the regular assignment of specific materials for reading, analysis, discussion and reporting, but extempore tea-talk on all subjects under the sun with half the time regularly devoted to politics. That is why I am anxious to find employment elsewhere where I could feel that I was using my knowledge and training constructively.” (Yusuf, 2012).

The disappointment with the Institute and the “sad predicament” of the faculty that has failed to recruit a faculty, academically qualified students, and acquiring the books acquired for the courses led to his departure from Pakistan and to “find employment elsewhere.” This extempore fashion of academic life and its predicament and declining prospective was pointed out in his last letter to Dr. Myron Bement Smith, after his arrival in Chicago:

“Until August I have been still hoping that the Central Institute of Islamic Research in Karachi would take the bold step of regarding academic work (curricular training of Pakistanis in the Islamic disciplines) as serious part of its duty and activity. But that hope, and the hope of ever doing something with the sad predicament of Pakistani Islamic scholarship were frustrated. With the tantalizing difficulty, I was able to convince the Institute to adopt a curriculum, and to publish the curriculum program in the prospectus that came out last May. But it soon became evident that the Institute was again not serious by taking no action at all towards implementing any of the three requisites of academic work: Recruiting a faculty, recruiting academically qualified students and acquiring the books required for the courses of the curriculum. In disappointment over all this, I packed and left.” (Yusuf, 2012).

Revisiting these letters explained the profound ideal of systematic learning and research of which al-Faruqi aspired to implement in the Muslim world. After leaving the Institute, he worked as Associate Professor of Islamic studies at the Department of Religion at Syracuse University, USA in 1964 and as guest researcher at the School of Divinity and the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. Here he developed and pioneer works for educational reform in dynamic effort to reclaim the legacy and historical and cultural memory of the ummah in world civilization with unbending resoluteness and rigour.

F. Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the conceptual framework and philosophy of education as set forth by al-Faruqi in his works that manifested the important foundation and principle of IOK. The major framework and underlying method he envisioned has been comprehensively outlined and developed in his works such as *Islamization of knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*; *Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective*; *Defining Islamic Traditionalism: First Principles in the Islamization of Thought*, *Islamizing the Social Science* and etc.

This comprehensive and integrated philosophy of knowledge had decisively transformed the worldview and theoretical construct of education in the Muslim world and its modern philosophy and outlook. The unprecedented philosophy of education developed by al-Faruqi had significantly geared to the

establishment of higher institution of learning in the Muslim world that embodied his ideas and approach. It forged intellectual tradition that shaped the constructive worldview of Islam reflecting the ummatic civilization and its Tawhidic consciousness.

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