

Tauhid as the essence of islamic education: an analysis of ismail raji al-faruqi's thought

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education as an idea that contains basic views about humans and the relevance of humans on this earth is determined by their ability to seek and utilize knowledge for the good of humans. This study uses a literature review (Library Research) to determine a specific research theme related to Al-Faruqi's thoughts, such as monotheism, Islamization of knowledge, and Islamic education. After determining the theme, the next step is to find relevant information from various sources, such as books, scientific articles, academic journals, theses, and primary sources. This method allows researchers to explore Al-Faruqi's ideas without conducting more in-depth field.

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Introduction

In Islamic discourse, education is not merely the transmission of knowledge; rather, it is also an integral part of the process of character formation and the development of a deep understanding of religious principles. In this context, human beings function simultaneously as both the subjects and objects of education itself (Saleh, 2023). Islamic education, as an idea that contains fundamental views on humanity and its relevance on earth, is determined by humanity's ability to seek and utilize knowledge for the benefit of humankind (Mahmudin, 2024).

Doctrinally, Islam strongly supports and encourages human beings to use and develop their intellectual capacities to the fullest extent in the pursuit of knowledge. God has promised that those who possess knowledge will be elevated to higher ranks, as knowledge is of profound importance for humanity (Mahmudin, 2024). Humans have continuously engaged in discussions about religion and science. Religion and science are often perceived as distinct fields of study; consequently, the ways in which they view and examine reality also differ. At certain moments, religion and science interact and integrate with one another; however, at the same time, they may also turn away from each other (Andreas Putra & Jahada, 2020).

There are several crucial issues that must be comprehensively addressed within the context of Islamic education. The primary problem is the existence of a barrier or dichotomy between Islamic education and the general sciences. As a result, Islamic educational institutions have lost the spirit of science as well as critical, rational-empirical scholarly methodologies (Andreas Putra & Jahada, 2020).

Muslims have long been aware that Islamic education has lagged behind Western education. Nevertheless, they continue to face an ongoing dilemma related to the two pillars of Western civilization: secularism and materialism. This situation is considered problematic, as it compels Muslims to engage with the West in order to overcome this backwardness. Secularism divides truth into two categories scientific truth and religious truth thereby creating a fragmented and opposing perception of reality among religious individuals.

Materialism, on the other hand, directs science toward an approach in which matter is regarded as paramount, positioning it as the fundamental and ultimate explanation for various scientific arguments (Andreas Putra & Jahada, 2020).

These conditions have stirred the hearts and minds of several Muslim thinkers, such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Ali Ashraf, to seek ways to resist secularism and materialism while simultaneously pursuing progress in science and technology (Bakar, 1995). They agreed that Islamic education is a crucial domain in need of reform for the Muslim community. Therefore, philosophical reflection on the meaning of truth, humanity, and knowledge becomes essential in the process of Islamic education. This article seeks to analyze Islamic education from the perspective of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi.

Research Methods

This study employs a library research approach to identify specific research themes related to Al-Faruqi's thought, such as *tawhid*, the Islamization of knowledge, and Islamic education. After determining the research themes, the next step involves collecting relevant information from various sources, including books, scholarly articles, academic journals, theses, and primary sources. This method enables researchers to explore Al-Faruqi's ideas without conducting more extensive field research.

Results and Discussion

Biography of Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi

Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi was born on January 1, 1921, in Palestine, specifically in the city of Jaffa (Shafiq, 2000). His father, Abdul Huda Al-Faruqi, was a well-known *qadhi* (Islamic judge) in Palestine. Before pursuing advanced studies in Islamic sciences at Al-Azhar University, Al-Faruqi completed his education at the American University of Beirut, where he first obtained a Master of Arts degree in philosophy.

After completing his studies at several universities, Al-Faruqi returned to the United States in 1964 and began his academic career as a visiting professor at the University of Chicago, School of Divinity. Earlier, in 1959, he had served as a faculty member at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He also pursued an academic career as a lecturer in Islamic studies at Syracuse University in New York. In 1968, he moved to Temple University in Philadelphia, where he became a professor of religion. At this institution, Al-Faruqi founded the Center for Islamic Studies. In addition to his role at Temple University, he was also appointed as a professor of Islamic studies at the Central Institute of Islamic Research in Karachi (Ridwan, 1994).

Al-Faruqi is widely recognized as a highly productive scholar in the fields of Islamic thought and education, as well as in various other disciplines. He authored approximately one hundred articles and twenty books, through which his ideas and perspectives spread widely across Muslim countries around the world. Moreover, he served as a visiting professor at numerous universities across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. He was also a member of seven leading academic journals. Some of Al-Faruqi's notable works include (Azra, 2003):

1. *On Arabism, Urubah, and Religion* (Amsterdam, 1962)
2. *Christian Ethics* (Amsterdam, 1968)
3. *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York, 1975)
4. *Triologue of the Abrahamic Faiths* (Virginia, 1982)
5. *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Kuala Lumpur, 1982)
6. *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York, 1986)

In disseminating his ideas, Al-Faruqi did not limit himself to writing books and articles; he also established socio-religious organizations engaged in intellectual activities. He demonstrated a strong commitment to the Islamization of knowledge and various aspects of Muslim life. In 1972, he founded the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) and served as its first president for two terms, with the second term lasting from 1978 to 1982 (Damis, 2013).

Thus, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi is recognized as an eminent Islamic intellectual and a productive, influential researcher in modern Islamic thought. With his extensive educational background, he was able to integrate a profound understanding of religion with modern scientific knowledge. Through his numerous scholarly works, he contributed significantly to the development and dissemination of Islamic thought throughout the Muslim world. Furthermore, his role as a visiting professor at universities across different regions reflects his commitment to sharing knowledge and inspiring younger generations. Another major achievement was his involvement in establishing Islamic studies departments at various universities, which remains a valuable legacy in the advancement of modern Islamic studies. Overall, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi played a pivotal role in enriching contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse and promoting a deeper understanding of Islam within the context of the modern world.

Al-Faruqi's Concept of *Tawhid*

According to Al-Faruqi, *fitrah* refers to the inherent human potential for religiosity, which is commonly understood as *tawhid* (Hasanudin, 2019). He emphasizes that the essence of Islamic knowledge and culture lies in Islam itself, and that the essence of Islam is *tawhid*. From Al-Faruqi's perspective, *tawhid* constitutes the core and fundamental substance of Islamic teachings. It represents a foundational worldview concerning truth within the dimensions of space, time, history, and the human journey. As a philosophy and guiding principle of life, the concept of *tawhid* influences various domains, including knowledge, philosophy, morality, social interaction, economics, family life, and aesthetic values (Jalaludin & Said, 1999).

Al-Faruqi views *tawhid* as the fundamental foundation of all aspects of human life. As articulated in his work *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, *tawhid* is regarded as the essence of religious experience, the core of Islamic teachings, and the basis for knowledge, philosophy, morality, social structures, communal principles, family values, political affairs, economic systems, and other dimensions of human existence (Al-Faruqi, 1993).

In the field of education, Al-Faruqi proposed new ideas and approaches related to the paradigm of Islamic education, which he observed to be continuously influenced by Western philosophy, particularly through the concept of educational dichotomy. He argued that this dichotomous model of education should be abolished and replaced with an integrated and holistic educational paradigm. According to Al-Faruqi, the prevailing educational paradigm fails to rest upon the principle of *tawhid* (Andreas Putra & Jahada, 2020). He developed the concept of Islamic education as a foundation that begins within the family context. For Al-Faruqi, *tawhid* serves as the guiding principle of the family, and the family itself is positioned as a means to achieve the divine purpose of servitude (*'ubudiyyah*). Fundamental educational values such as love, mutual assistance, and support form the basis of complex and expansive family relationships.

Islam teaches that moral conduct (*akhlaq*) is not grounded in subjective emotions but in *tawhid*. According to Al-Faruqi, the significance of *tawhid* for humanity is inseparable from the importance of Islam itself. *Tawhid* must become the spiritual essence that animates every Muslim, giving meaning and direction to all human activities. All human endeavors must depend upon God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and every aspect of human life should embody the principle of *tawhid*.

Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi formulated five principles of *tawhid* as both a conceptual framework and a methodological foundation: the unity of God, the unity of creation, the unity of truth and knowledge, the unity of life, and the unity of humanity. For him, the Islamization of knowledge entails a critical re-examination of established scientific concepts using *tawhid* as the guiding

principle. This process involves the evaluation of data, methodologies, analyses, and interpretations, with the aim of constructing a genuinely new body of knowledge aligned with Islamic values. Furthermore, in operationalizing the Islamization of knowledge, Al-Faruqi proposed several concrete steps to achieve this objective, namely:

1. Mastery of modern scientific disciplines
2. Mastery of knowledge related to the field of Islamic studies
3. Determining the specific relevance of each modern discipline to Islam
4. Identifying creative ways to integrate Islamic intellectual heritage with modern knowledge
5. Developing Islamic thought so that humanity may adhere to divine law

Based on the explanation above, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi asserts that the concept of *tawhid* encompasses a profound and comprehensive understanding of the oneness of God in all aspects of life. According to him, *tawhid* is not merely a belief that God is the ultimate truth, but also a paradigm that guides human action across various dimensions of existence. This includes recognizing Allah as the Creator, Sustainer, and Regulator of the universe, as well as acknowledging that all aspects of life ultimately depend upon Him. Al-Faruqi's concept of *tawhid* also emphasizes that worship must be directed solely to Allah and that no action should deviate from His teachings. Furthermore, he argues that human beings bear moral responsibility as God's vicegerents (*khalifah*) on earth to apply the principles of *tawhid* in their daily lives, ensuring coherence between belief and action.

Al-Faruqi's Concept of *Tawhid* in Education

Based on the preceding discussion, one of the central concepts emphasized by Al-Faruqi in education is *tawhid*. *Tawhid* refers to the belief in the oneness of Allah across all aspects of life and creation. Al-Faruqi's concept of *tawhid* in education can be outlined as follows:

1. Ethical and Moral Foundation

Fundamentally, the application of *tawhid* exerts a positive influence on human life. In line with the objectives of Islamic education, *tawhid* is positioned as the foundation of Islamic civilization. It also serves as a primary driving force that motivates individuals to engage in virtuous actions for the benefit of themselves, their families, society, religion, and nation. In Islam, moral excellence (*akhlaq*) is not merely rooted in human emotions or instincts, but is grounded in sound and upright *tawhid* (Ramayulis, 2001). The concept of *tawhid* teaches that all actions and behaviors in life must reflect an awareness of Allah's presence. In education, this perspective helps establish a strong ethical and moral foundation for students, encouraging honesty, justice, and generosity based on the belief that Allah observes all human actions.

2. Character Development

According to Al-Faruqi, educational management consists of three essential components: an understanding of knowledge itself, the application of knowledge in daily life, and the principle of *tawhid* as the fundamental foundation. These three elements must be addressed comprehensively, as the ultimate aim of education is to cultivate strong character and noble morality (Marzuki, 2015). Education that emphasizes the concept of *tawhid* as proposed by Al-Faruqi is therefore capable of fostering positive character development among students, instilling in them an awareness of their responsibility toward Allah and toward fellow human beings.

3. The Relationship Between Knowledge and Religion

Al-Faruqi's concept of *tawhid* views knowledge and religion not as contradictory, but as mutually complementary. This perspective can be realized by integrating religious understanding with scientific curricula within educational institutions. Al-Faruqi emphasizes that modern science in the twentieth century has been largely shaped by the principles of liberalism and secularism. He argues that secular and

liberal scientific paradigms have generated various forms of damage. This crisis is evident not only within academic institutions that oppose humanistic principles, but also within social and natural systems that have increasingly deteriorated due to large-scale environmental exploitation (Syarif, 2019). Moreover, the negative impact of secular scientific systems includes moral degradation within society. As religious and spiritual dimensions are displaced by materialistic and pragmatic mindsets, spirituality gradually diminishes in modern society. Therefore, according to Al-Faruqi, the only way to address these challenges is to reintegrate moral values into the scientific system, particularly within education, where learning processes take place. To implement this vision, Al-Faruqi introduced the concept of the "Islamization of science," which he defined as the initial step toward integrating knowledge in order to harmonize the life of the Muslim community (Tabroni, 2018).

4. Understanding Creativity and Tolerance

Al-Faruqi's concept of *tawhid* teaches that all human beings originate from a single source and are equal before Allah. This principle fosters a more inclusive understanding of cultural, religious, and social diversity. Education grounded in Al-Faruqi's *tawhid*-based framework can promote tolerance and reduce prejudice toward differences, encouraging respect for plurality within society.

5. Motivation in Education

Awareness of Allah as the All-Knowing and All-Powerful serves as a powerful source of motivation for students to learn and develop themselves. Students are empowered by the belief that their efforts are recognized by Allah and can be directed toward making positive contributions to society.

6. Understanding the Purpose of Life

The concept of *tawhid* directs individuals to live with the purpose of serving Allah and contributing to the welfare of humanity. Within the educational context, students can be guided to reflect on their life goals, develop their talents and potentials, and channel them toward beneficial and meaningful endeavors.

Conclusion

The concept of the Islamization of knowledge in educational institutions aims to align scientific knowledge with Islamic teachings by excluding forms of knowledge that are not grounded in *tawhidic* values. According to Al-Faruqi, the steps involved in the Islamization of knowledge include appropriating modern academic disciplines, reclaiming disciplines that encompass the field of Islamic studies, determining how each modern scientific discipline holds relevance to Islam, identifying ways to integrate Islamic perspectives with modern knowledge, and directing Islamic thought toward the realization of God's divine pattern (*sunnat Allah*).

To implement this concept within educational institutions, it is necessary to apply a structured framework for the Islamization of knowledge so that Islamic educational institutions do not lose their distinctive identity. Within the educational curriculum, this can be achieved by integrating modern sciences with Islamic disciplines, as well as through the role of teachers in developing and implementing a non-dichotomous or integrated educational approach. Although various thinkers have criticized Al-Faruqi's concept of the Islamization of knowledge, he is nevertheless respected for his intellectual courage in critiquing modernity, which he viewed as deviating from divine values, and for his conviction that the Islamization of knowledge can restore the *tawhidic* vision.

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