



2014 Annual Curriculum for Cohesion Dinner

Address of Mr. Farooq Murad

Secretary General

Muslim Council Of Britain

Thursday, 26 June 2014

Greetings of Peace.

I am delighted to be able to address this distinguished gathering of the academics, patrons, friends and supporters of Curriculum for Cohesion as this gathering represents the blossoming of the seed of Matthew Wilkinson's work drawing upon the philosophy of Professor Roy Bhaskar.

The Muslim Council of Britain has been supporting this work since 2007, when we co-funded and helped supervise Matthew's PhD at King's College London, **History Curriculum, Citizenship and Muslim Boys: learning to succeed**.

The MCB, led by my predecessor, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Bari, at that time recognised that Matthew was striving to do at an **academic** level what the Muslim Council of Britain strives to do at a **community** level, namely to serve the common good of British society, promote a better understanding of Islam and promote the life-chances and educational achievement of Muslim young people, who often struggle in and after school to realise their full potential.



Also, as a Trustee of Muslim Aid, I am proud to say that Muslim Aid a donor to Curriculum for Cohesion that has helped this research project happen.

This is why we are delighted both by the publication of Matthew's book, **A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-faith World: a philosophy for success in education**, and by the expansion of the project to develop education to assist the judiciary distinguish between authentic and damaging forms of Islam.

A mutual understanding and cooperation between the criminal justice system and the Muslim community is critical for our young people in times when misunderstandings and stereotypes may hamper justice, to the detriment of us all.

Indeed, our support for Matthew has turned out to be piece of enlightened self-interest.

The Curriculum for Cohesion team have in return been of great service to us.

For example, in helping us make last year a single Muslim community response to the **National Curriculum Review for History** and now in the re-drafting of our **Guidance for Schools** report.

This **Guidance for Schools** will help schools incorporate the basic elements of the Islamic faith into school life sensitively in a way that is manageable and appropriate for both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers, parents and pupils.



More generally, there are a number of facets of the work of Curriculum for Cohesion that have given me as a Muslim community leader great cause for hope in often bleak times for our community.

First, Curriculum for Cohesion shows that the spirit of the great tradition of high-level, multi-faith scholarship that **was** the hallmark of the high period of classical Islamic civilisation is alive and potentially **still** able to make a vital contribution to sorting out society's most intractable and delicate social problems, such as the relationship of faith to life in operationally secular political democracies.

Second, the multi-faith academic team and patrons of Curriculum for Cohesion, who are of the highest calibre, are testimony to the fact that our shared values and commitments to improve the lives of young people trump our religious differences and, more than that, our religious differences can provide a route to mutual enrichment and greater collective success.

For example, the Christian tradition of compassion and mercy which is still very much a part of the culture of Britain can help young Muslims reconnect to a parallel tradition in Islam.

Third, and in the light of the recent Trojan Horse affair and Michael Gove's call for the teaching of British values, Curriculum for Cohesion shows that the best British values of religious tolerance and intellectual rigour are also core Islamic values.

If we can help people access proper and enlightened understandings of being Muslim together with proper and enlightened understandings of



being British, being British *and* being Muslim ought to be the most natural thing in the world for young people.

Indeed, we know that being a committed Muslim and proudly British is possible, since independent research polls repeatedly show that Muslims are amongst those Britons who are both most committed to their faith *and* most proud to be British.

Curriculum for Cohesion's work which shows how this combination of Muslim and British identities can be successfully and authentically integrated has never been more urgently needed.

Moreover, if this work of successful integration is **not** accomplished, and Curriculum for Cohesion's work is **not** properly supported and recognised, I and others, fear the consequences in terms of a deterioration in relations between Muslim Britons and Britons of other faiths and none.

The reason why we are here tonight is to lend our support for this vital project.

So may I end by urging you in the strongest terms to support the work of Curriculum for Cohesion in developing clear, careful and strategic thinking and education of the highest quality so we can promote the success of *all* young people in a wide variety of settings at a critical juncture in the history of British Muslim-non-Muslim relations.

Thank you and peace.