

Islamic Philosophy as the Basis to Ensure Academic Excellence

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Abstract

The nature of education based on Islam itself has the very significant contribution towards human's life. Discussing Islamic Philosophy of Education will focus on what philosophy is as a core of any theoretical and practical elements of all aspects and knowledge. The philosophical approach is discussed from the perspective of Islam. Then, this writing looks at how Islamic Philosophy tends to mould education in the entire of situation. The discussion of Islamic Philosophy of Education needs to be understood wisely in order to relate it with the context of learning process, and other related situations around us. The article also looks on how the branches of philosophy (such as metaphysics and axiology) and school of thought of philosophy (such as pragmatism) is relevant in discussing Islamic Philosophy of Education. This understanding of Islamic Philosophy is proven as important in understanding any current scenario in the context or our society in this country, among others are on how the implementation of the aspect of Islamic Philosophy of Education is important in viewing the social problem; the implementation of the aspect of Islamic Philosophy of Education in viewing the Environmental Problem; and the aspect of Islamic Philosophy of Education in Viewing the Emotional and Spiritual Intelligences in current society. There is no doubt that looking at the process of learning and also any current scenario in this country is something that should be closely related to what and how someone should know from the view of Islamic Philosophy. In the end, it is seen as important towards achieving holistic learning.

Keywords: Education, Islamic, Learning, Philosophy

1. Introduction

In the centuries after the birth of Islam (632 AD), Muslims' scholar had established schools, universities and libraries. It had become the center of learning, including the realm of astronomy, physics, art, philosophy, and medicine. Moreover, the various methods had been pioneered by Muslim scholars and scientists and became the foundation of modern sciences, and were taught in European universities up to the 18th Century. The rise of Muslims towards the civilization in a period of four decades was based on Al-Islam's emphasis on learning. This is obvious when one takes a look at the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad which are filled with references to learning, education, observation, and the use of reason. The first verse of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet of Al Islam and the night of 27th Ramadan in 611 AD;

“In the name of thy Lord who created man from a clot. And thy Lord is the Most Generous Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not.”

(Quran, 96: 1-5)

“Are those who have knowledge and those who have no knowledge alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful.”

(Quran, 39:9)

And the Quran exhorts the Muslims to do scientific research:

“And who bring the truth and believe therein such are the dutiful.”

(Quran, 39: 33)

There is a diversity of approaches to, and stances taken on, writing about Islam and education. While the vast majority of this literature is based on the view that there is a distinct Islamic position with regards to education (Sardar, 1989; Iqbal, 1996; Wan Daud, 1998; Ali, 2000), some critical voices question this fundamental assumption (Hoodbhoy, 1992). The advocates of a distinctively Islamic approach to education also differ among themselves on various matters; some argue for a common inter-faith religious framework on education (The Islamic Academy, 1990) while others claim, at least implicitly, a superiority of the Islamic approach over those of other religions (Mukadam, 1997).

In Islam there is no such thing as knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Knowledge has no value and virtue in and by itself, but the actual virtue lies in bringing human kind closer to Allah. The view that knowledge is the path that leads to Allah highlights two things about Islam. Firstly, the knowledge in Islam is important for a Muslim’s spiritual growth and development. Secondly, since knowledge is acquired through the active process of going beyond what one already knows, critical thinking is essential for a Muslim to grow intellectually and spiritually. It further suggests that intellectual growth without spiritual development is aimless wandering, and spiritual development without the intellectual component is meaningless.

An authentic Islamic vision of education has the power to re-animate a truly holistic conception of education which encompasses not only the higher intellectual faculties, but also the realization that human excellence is inseparable from beauty and virtue and should never be limited to an individualistic concept of personal achievement, mastery and success. This is a vision of *tauhid*, in which cognitive, moral and spiritual function are all intertwined and interdependent, and necessarily actualized in right action.

Islamic Philosophy is based on divine revelation, which is the Al-Quran and the As-Sunnah. According to Hassan Langgulung (1979), the basis of Islamic Philosophy are the believe in God (Allah), the believe in God’s devotees, the believe in divine revelation that had been gave to the prophets, the believe that human has a potency within the development of morality and spirituality, the believe that each individual is responsible for his action, the belief in life and life after death, and also the belief on universal similarity among the Muslims. Based on these aspects, a balance and holistic individual is able to be produced through the appreciation towards Islamic Philosophy of Education. It is parallel with the implementation of National Philosophy of Education that based on God’s devotion in producing the individual that physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and socially balanced (Mok Soon Sang, 2004).

2. Philosophy of Islamic Education from the Perspectives of Philosophy

2.1 Axiology

Axiology is a theory of ethic that is one of branches of philosophy. From the view of Islam, axiology can be defined as behavior that includes the entire manners in human’s life. According to Mohammad Qutb, education is the process to shape the holistic and balanced human (Mok Soon Sang, 2004). The main objective of education is to develop the potency of human’s intellect, physical, emotion and spiritual towards the level of perfection. Within this process, the implementation of values has being focused by the Islamic Philosophy of Education, which the aspect of ethic and moral can not be separated from education and the thought of Islam. It is parallel with the branches of axiology that believe education is the realm that provide with values. Within the axiology of Islam itself, the knowledgeable person should be the moralistic and well-behaved person.

There are three branches within the thought of Islam, and one of them is the thought of moral and manner. This branch include the matters that should be practiced, which is connected with the manner and moral of human, such as fair, religiosity, brave, wisdom, and trustworthiness. The venerable characteristic of human can be seen from the existence of two inclinations, which is the focus towards worldly concerns and the sense of selfishness, and also the conflict between right and wrong. However, both factors can be prevented if humans believe on

Allah, by doing His command and avoid from His prohibition. If humans practice the aspects that has been highlighted by the Islamic Philosophy of Education such as make the Prophet Muhammad as the role model in their life, the universal peacefulness will be able to be achieved.

This values has been implemented in the Islamic Education in order to be practiced by each individual and endowed from generation to generation, and producing the strength society in leading this world as *khalifah*. The system of moral and manner in Islam correlates with the system of belief, religious worship, *muamalat*, and others. It has the connection with the purpose of the creation of nature.

2.2 Pragmatism

Each elements of Islamic Philosophy of Education are entirely focused, as this philosophy stresses towards the correlation of knowledge, belief and practice. Based on the definition of philosophy from the characteristic of philosophy, the realm of philosophy is deeply looking towards the fact, value, knowledge and God. For instance, the aspect of cleanliness is very important in Islam. There are many arguments regarding the factor that cleanliness has been stressed in Islam, as it is closely related to Muslims' belief as well as the human's wellness. This is parallel with the principle of pragmatism that believe the medium of knowledge has a quality of truth if it is able to be practiced within the daily life of human.

The member of pragmatism also believes that knowledge integrated between acquired knowledge and revealed knowledge. Based on the knowledge regarding the cleanliness, the epistemology about this aspect is stated in Quran and has been known as the *sahih ilmu wahyu*, while the *ilmu akal* is based on logical thought. Logically, the aspect of cleanliness should be concerned as carelessness will cause a lot of problem in our daily life. Thus, Islamic Philosophy of Education naturally pragmatism because it combines acquired knowledge and revealed knowledge, which cannot be separated.

2.3 Metaphysic

From the view of metaphysic, the thought of Islam concentrates on the aspects between human, human and God, and human with the environment. Obviously, Islamic Philosophy of Education teaches humans to recognize their Creator, that is Allah, and the way they should behave for each of the relation.

For instance, based on the principles that support the thoughts of Islam towards nature, it is stated that the nature is belong to Allah, not human. Thus, natures need to be protected including the ecological balance. Humans are forbidden to exploit the sources of nature since nature has been created by Allah to reinforce human's life. According to this principle the Islamic Philosophy of Education stresses on the good relation between human and nature. Moreover, in order to overcome the social problem among teenagers for instance, the awareness towards their responsibility as the *khalifah* Allah is able to bring them to the 'right path'.

3. Islamic Philosophy of Education and Holistic Learning

The pillar of faith within Quran becomes the reference and guidance for Muslim (Hassan Langgulong, 1979). Among of them are; to believe in Allah (SWT) (God) in His Existence, His right to be worshipped, His Oneness, His Attributes, and His right to legislate, to believe in God's angels, to believe in the Holy Qur'an and the other Holy Books, to believe in God's Messengers, of whom Adam was the first and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the last, to believe in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, to believe in Divine Preordainment. The result from this belief shows that the objective of Islamic education is to produce the balanced development of human itself along with the Islamic values. According to Kurshid Ahmad (1980), education based on Islam is able to produce an individual that has his own quality and belief towards the Islamic idealism.

Because of human was created with several weaknesses, thus, they need a guidance from the religion. Therefore, the philosophy of Islamic Education is to provide human with sufficient knowledge in order to make them know and realize their creation, responsibility, and the way they should manage the responsibility as the caliph of Allah. The effort to improve themselves with the better and perfect characteristics is the process of Islamic education (Abdul Rahman Aroff & Zakaria Kasa, 1988). By looking at its definition, the philosophy of Islamic education implements the holistic approach. Holistic is one of the characteristic of philosophy which means comprehensiveness and completeness. This term is very important in education as it includes the aspect of intellect, emotion, spiritual, and physical. Islam not restricts the followers from learning the other fields of education.

According to Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas (1977), the main objective of knowledge from the Islamic perspective is through the concepts that shaping the major elements in Islamic education, which are the concept of al-din, concept of human, concept of knowledge and *ma'rifah*, concept of *hikmah*, concept of equality, concept of ethic, and the concept of *Kulliyah-Jami'ah*. Each of the concepts is mutually dependent. Furthermore,

Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas states that from the practical use, the concept (1) is based on the objective to gain knowledge and the involvement within the education process; (2) based on the scope and its target; (3) based on the content; (4) based on value or criteria regarding the second and third; (5) based on the dissemination regarding the fourth; (6) based on the method regarding the first until fifth; and (7) based on the way of implementation regarding all the aspects. It is accepted that the explanation regarding the holistic philosophy of Islamic education becomes wide.

The education in Islam also becomes the effort to develop the proactive individual, which is individual that realize on his creation, status, trustworthiness, and his responsibility as the slave of Allah; has the strength of thinking, vision and able to look something in the right perspective; aware and sensitive towards every act, as each will be judged, until every choices are made based on right and implemented through the right path (Mohd Idris Jauzi, 1991). Therefore, education in Islam is to reinforce the self potential of an individual. From the aspect of intellectual, each human has already been provided with the ability to empower the knowledge and truth. From the aspect of physical, human has the ability to develop the strength and resistance. Thus, with education, human will gain the sense of perfection in their life and also able to strengthen their civilization.

4. The Implementation of the Aspect of Islamic Philosophy of Education in Viewing the Social Problem

The metaphysic of Islam discusses the principles of Islam towards the nature. Islamic Philosophy of Education encourages the entire humans to consider and think of their act, as every action has its reciprocation from Allah. Thus, by preparing the teenagers with this aspect, they would appreciate their mind and utilize it towards the right action. There is *hadith* by Prophet Muhammad regarding the significance of knowledge in Islamic philosophy of Education.

“There will not move Adam’s heir at the Judgment’s Day until they are questioned about four things: about his age and what he use to, about his young and what had he strives for, about his property and how it comes and how it was spent for, and about his knowledge and how he benefits it.”

This *hadis* explains that each Muslim will be asked by Allah during the Judgment’ Day regarding his age, young, property and knowledge, which is clearly stated in Islamic Philosophy of Education. Furthermore, the concept of integration between *ilmu aqli* and *ilmu naqli* is able to solve the social problem among the teenagers. *Ilmu aqli* is the knowledge that constructed by the thought of mind while the *ilmu naqli* is based on the abstract thought that cannot be analyzed by mind, such as heaven and hell which is being explain in the Quran and hadith.

In discussing the social problem among teenagers, individuals need to discover the objective of human’s creation by Allah SWT. Thus, they would realize their responsibility as the caliph of Allah on this earth, and make an effort to gain it. One of the concepts which can be applied in discussing this problem is the concept of oneness of Allah that consist of human’s thought, the guidance of hidayah, as well as *aqal* and *qalbu* (the heart) which is not alienated. In order to look at the power of the creator, which is Allah, human is encouraged to observe and to think of their surrounding and thing on the function. This will strengthens the concept of worship in themselves and encourage them to do the right. Thus, the teenagers should be guided to know Allah even during their childhood.

From the aspect of axiology, social problem that occur among the teenagers nowadays can be concluded as happen because they are lack of knowledge and toward Islamic teaching. Most of the teenagers do not follow the rule of Islam that make them lost the purpose of their life. Thus, through the appreciation towards the concept of *taqwa* as the way of life it is able to help them to distinguish between the pros and cons within their life. This concept stresses on the notion of fear to Allah that encourage humans towards practice the *halal* and prevent themselves from the *haram*. Besides, the ethics of Islam should be entire implemented including the belief, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotion and others.

Among the characteristic of Islamic manners is; each manner is not opposing the nature of human’s creation, as it parallel with human’s natural tendency. It concerns regarding the human’s responsibility in producing the objective person. Furthermore, the purpose of self-perfection is being focused in Islam too, along with the flourished society. It was stated that if morally behaviors are practiced by the unit of community; it can produce the quality and excellence society. Regarding the social problems among the teenagers, it can be concluded that the problems are not only affect their life, but also include and influence the society itself. Thus, the aim towards morality behavior among human is able to be gained through the spiritual purity and the strength of belief. Each human should be responsible for their act in gaining the better result as a Muslim. Holistically, Islam will nurture human towards the excellent life.

5. Conclusion

Education based on Islam has the significant contribution towards human's life. This has been proved through the divine revelation to Holy Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. regarding the command to know Allah S.W.T, to discover the nature's phenomena, as well as to recognize self development including the aspects of *aqidah*, knowledge and practice. This principle has become the core of Islamic Philosophy of Education and is entirely focused as it highlights the contribution of knowledge, belief, and practice within human's life. The Islamic Philosophy of Education is a holistic medium of education, which include the comprehensive aspects of knowledge. Based on the Holistic Philosophy, human is believed as the part of nature.

The Islamic Philosophy is also stress on the concept that each aspect is simultaneously interconnected (interconnected reality). From the aspect of curriculum, the subject of Islamic Education that has been applied from the Islamic Philosophy of Education is comprehensive and integrative. The concept of stability that includes the aspects of emotion, spiritual, intuition and imagination of individual is also focus in the Islamic Philosophy of Education. The variety of aspects are taught through this subject, including the method of practical in order to let the students to think and solve each difficulty based on Quran. Thus, through the implementation of Islamic Philosophy of Education within the realm of education, the holistic and comprehensive learning from each aspect of life is able to be achieved.

The teaching of Islamic Education as the approach to implement Islamic Philosophy of Education among the students become the effective method as it able to produce a balanced individual in term of their physical, emotion, spiritual, and intellect to fulfill the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education. Therefore, it would be a brilliant effort for Muslims to explore further the nature of higher human faculties and suggest ways in which they can be awaked and nurtured in an authentically Islamic educational process. It is not only through this revival Muslims are able to transform education in the Muslim world, but also through engaging with mainstream educators in other traditions, which will lead a real contribution to the revival of the best educational practice in the wider world and for all mankind.

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