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Research paper

Transformative Education to Prepare A Generation with Strong Character

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Abstract

Character education is crucial for the society's and state's sustainability, especially in modern and global era. It is important even more for the future of young generation which requires special attention and serious. Therefore, a holistic educational paradigm is vital to be formulated and then immediately implemented in our education world. This paper focuses on the study of how education has a central force in building students' character. The method and approach used in this paper is a philosophical approach. From the results of this study, the authors recommend that the concept of education should develop programs focusing on character and teaching values. The programs emphasize on the issue of human identity beside the development of communication skills and interpersonal relationships in performing the duties and responsibilities as a caliph on earth. Therefore, the curriculum must be compiled and structured to meet the overall objectives of education. Curriculum is actually not only verbal concerning the purpose, content, and courses, it is also a non-verbal curriculum (hidden curriculum) in form of exemplary educators or teachers (including the leader of the nation). Thus, it is the nature of teachers, educators and leaders that all words, deeds, and provisions should become a role model for others (students and community).

Keywords: *Education, transformative, strong characterized generation*

1. Introduction

All levels of society, such as parents, educators, or even religionist are now facing a major dilemma in education, regarding "What is the best way to educate youths and prepare the to face the future global challenges". Some people answer the dilemma by going back to the past, while others want to look into the future. However, on top of that, all people are, indeed, in need of improvement and reconstruction of the concept of education towards bright future generations. the future global challenges". Some people answer the dilemma by going back to the past, while others want to look into the future. However, on top of that, all people are, indeed, in need of improvement and reconstruction of the concept of education towards bright future generations.

The dilemma of how to provide the best education for our children nowadays requires a sincere evaluation by answering the following questions: First, where are we now? Second, where should we be? Third, how do we plan? In other words, the future of our children and society depends on our ability to answer the questions correctly and the extent to which we are able to transfer our life's vision and mission to future generations.

This educational model is an attempt to not only address fundamental issues of contemporary education, but also to propose a framework of reforms. This model proposes a vision and approach to education which maintains the character, is appropriate for the learners, and enables them to perform self-discovery and social awareness, which comes from selected tradition and modernization.

2. Present and future challenges in education

Education, both in the national context in Indonesia and as part of the world issues, is facing a formidable challenge. A major agenda need to be fulfilled by Indonesia right now is to create a state that is safe, fair and prosperous with the protection of Almighty God, which is supported by knowledgeable, devout and faithful citizens. Thus, the education is demanded to participate in bringing Indonesia into a new form by formulating the steps of developments. Does education developed by educational institutions so far fulfill the functions and objectives? Therefore, as answered by Kuntowijoyo (l991: 350), that education today empirically does not have substantial power because the effect is still inferior to the forces of business and politics. Allegedly, today's cultural centers are not in the academic world, but in the world of business and politics. In such setting, educational institutions are prone to subordination.

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Modern society in general also doesn't really respect human values, such as honesty, trust, keeping promises, punctuality, order, and other things that should be concerned by educated people. Then, why is there a disconnection between values and practices in public life? And what role can be given by education in this context? The problems faced by today's society cannot be separated from modernization and globalization factors affecting all aspects of life: economic, social, political, and also education. The effect of modernization has had a big hand in changing the style and pattern of life in almost all levels of society, and Indonesian's society are included.

It is undeniable that our children learn values of life mostly from popular culture and the mass media. The influence of colonialism which brought culture of materialism, secularism and individualism over the centuries has left indelible scars on the mindset and value system. The above problems also weaken the generations' character building.

The failure of contemporary education in general is also caused by the formulation of the vision and mission that are not compatible with the ideal and empirical conditions. This is due to at least four main reasons: first, fundamentally, our pedagogy does not focus on character and personality building; second, most of the given materials are not prepared to develop real life skills; third, the learning method still tends to concentrate on teaching rather than on learning. Moreover, contemporary education typically does not have a correct understanding of the development of the students, in the aspects of moral, social, psychological, even pedagogical. The subject matter is still normative, verbalistic and textual; Fourth, the existence of substantial dichotomous view of science (the science of religion and general knowledge). Most of our society still considers that "religion" and "science" is a different entity and unharmonizable, both are considered to have its own territory in terms of formal-material objects, methods, criteria of truth, the role played by scientists and the status of each theory (Compare with Mouleman, 2002).

Until today, there are still some common misconceptions about education that keep influencing many parties' thought. The misunderstanding is caused by the partial and mechanistic understanding of the child and the educational process. Some of our educators also still have the notion that all children are equal and can be injected excessive information. Because of such understanding, many children fail in the learning process. Therefore, educators and parents need to know and understand that every child is unique and has its own characteristics. Nowadays, we required educational practice that provides change towards a more natural, thorough, and friendly (humanist) understanding on children, education and the learning process.

Education is something dynamic, practical and relevant according to the real needs of the community, so that it has the power to inspire and transform human life as a whole. To realize these goals, a concerted and appropriate effort is needed. Educators and parents should increase their efforts in finding alternative solutions that can bridge the gap between values and practices on future generations.

Science and technology will not be able to change the human soul when the soul was filled with a clear purpose in life. The ideal vision of education has made a clear distinction between teaching things that are informative and about transformative things. The purpose of real education is not just to inform, but rather focuses on how to transform students into true human. The change of paradigm from information-oriented education to transformation-oriented education is must be done if we are really willing to build an ideal future generations.

Comprehensive reform is very necessary in our today's educational system. The approach is based on four core components: First, an integrated conceptual framework of education that is based on the principle of monotheism and holistic education; second, to review the purpose of education and its components for the character development; third, reconstruct the curriculum or powerful ideas to transform characters; fourth, reorienting the teaching and learning experience toward discovery learning. If we want an important position in the international arena today, the education reform should be carried out. Reform requires a restructuring of the key elements of an educational institution, such as a conceptual framework, content, structure and process of education.

3. Epistemology of education

Speaking of education, then it should start from our perspective (world-view) of man. How do our philosophy view human? Starting from this question, substantial issues of education will be solved. Our philosophical paradigm is theo-anthropocentric, meaning the orientation of divinity and humanity are two things that cannot be separated from one another. In our view, human beings are mukallaf creatures, loaded with the obligation and responsibility. Humans arealso part of the reality of the cosmos, which according to some experts referred to as al-kâin al-nâtiq, "speaking creature" and "beings who have noble values" (See Qur'an surah al-Tin (95): 4-6).

According to al-'Aqqād (1973I: 21), people are more aptly nicknamed "speaking creature" rather than as "angels coming to earth" or "evolved animals", because man is more precious than all of it. This reason by al-'Aqqād is no exaggeration, because according to him, "the angels coming to earth", as well as "animals that evolved", has no role as a guide to good or even bad path. Only humans are able to bear the burden and responsibilities mandated by God. Therefore, do not be surprised if some stated that man is "the creator" after God. This can be understood, how human beings endowed by God ratio was able to create spectacular creations such as science and technology, while the angels bow down to him because unable to compete intellectually. This intellectual excellence is what makes humans superior to other creatures, but he will be decadent, even less valuable than the animal if he does destructive action (See Qur'an surah al-Tin 5-6 and al-A'raf (7): 179).

In the holy book Al-Qur'an, human terms referred to by the phrase: al-insân, al-baṣar, and Banî Âdam. Some experts argue, al-Insân is derived from the word nasiya-yansā nisyân which means forget, that people often forget his promise to God. Humans' nickname "al-insan" is derived from the nâsa-yanŭsu which means shaking. Al-Insân is derived from the word ins, means benign. The word al-insân implies humans as social and cultural beings. While the so-called al-baṣar means looks good, beautiful and happy. The word al-baṣar mentioned in the Qur'an as much as 123 times, and in general means excited, 37 times means human, and twice referred to something related to sex. Al-Baṣar means human reality as a concrete character, a mature man going into a responsible life as inheritors of the earth (Abd Al-Baqi, tt.). Humans not only have physical occurrences, but also rŭhâni and nafsâni (Abdul Ghani Abud and Hasan Ibrahim Abd al-'Al, 1990: 46-47).

The last aspect is less concerned or is often ignored by the designers of education. Humans also have a role as 'ābid (creatures who worship God) and the khalîfah fi al-ard (the leader on earth). Therefore, this aspect should not be forgotten in education. Generally, philosophers, including Ibn Sina, al-Fārabi and al-Ghazāli-assume that the soul is composed of three types: nabātiyyah, hayawāniyyah, and

insāniyyah. Nabātiyyah is the soul related to eating, growing and giving birth. Hayawāniyyah is the soul related to knowing little things and moving according to it is irâdah. Insāniyyah is the soul that acts and knows common things (Saeed, 1994: 93, Zainul Hamdi, 1994: 99-100, see also Usman Najati, tt.:144-145). Muhammad Iqbal (1981:127) in addition, states that a perfect man (insān kāmil) is the peak of the development of the human ego who have power. The human ego is a strength to make human into the caliph of God. Perfect man or insān kāmil is a human being who is able to have the goodness of God. God and man are two different entities. The relation of God and human, according to Iqbal, is bottom-up meaning moving from human to God.

How humans are able to communicate with God, other human beings and the universe? Surah al- Qaŝaŝ (28): 77 gives clear explanation in Quran. Fourteen centuries ago, Prophet Muhammad has prepared ethics regulations for creatures. Empirically, Islam is a religion that not only regulates human relationships with his/her God (vertical) but also human relationships with another and the relationship with the universe (horizontal). One's perfection is judged based on the incorporation of the principle of idea (faith) and action (charity). This suggests that one's faith should be implemented in the social life (good deeds).

4. Transformative education framework

In Arabic, the term "education" is referred with the word tarbiyah. It is one of Arabic terms having multiple meanings. According to Raghib al-Aŝfahāni, (in M. Zainuddin, 2006), tarbiyah means "to cause something evolving from one phase to the next phase until it reaches the peak of potency." This indicates that human nature is already embedded within a child and education is the process of developing the nature which is more than just a transfer of knowledge. Broadly, tarbiyah is a discipline for the creation and development of human nature. According to al-Aŝfahâni, the word Rabb is also linguistically related to the word tarbiyah which implies that God or Rabb preserves and develops human in every phase of life to reach the peak of potency. Thus, the concept of improvement, development, and parenting is the aspect of tarbiyah.

To achieve excellence in education, educators must understand the laws of growth and development since it also directly happens to students. Moreover, an educator must incorporate this law in a pedagogical-philosophical and praxis way.

Otherwise, an educator would act against the natural law and would be contrary to the students' development. By considering these factors, educators must understand the desire of the students and the way to educate. The phenomenon of the universe must be understood as signs (verse) of the greatness and omnipotence of God, and we shall associate it with our educational world. Trees, for example, is a perfect metaphor for the process of "development" known as tarbiyah. For example, Surah Ibrahim (14): 24 in al-Qur'an, God uses a tree as the metaphor to explain the superiority of good over evil. "Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky?" The tree and its growth process is a sign or point of reflection which is very remarkable for those who raise children. Both parents and educators must do in-depth contemplation to find varied relationships related to raise them properly and appropriately. The use of this tree metaphor is a way to explain the nature of tarbiyah and the stages of children's growth.

The first area needs to be reformed is the vision or conceptual framework for education as a whole. Education starts from the principle of monotheism/tawhîd. This is the basis for the view on education. The principle of tawhîd comprises philosophical and methodological concept which is structured and coherent to the worldview and all aspects of life. Tawhîd teaches us to gather holistic, integrated, and comprehensive views on education. Modern Education (Western) is generally based on the incoherent and impartial educational point of view. Thus, students and teachers rarely have the same view on the overall educational process. Moreover, the principle of tawhîd requires educators to have a comprehensive view and also the true purpose on education and life itself. Therefore, the concept of tawhîd must be the basis of a child's education, including: what is taught (content), how we organize and what to teach (structure), and how do we teach it (the process) involving ontological, epistemological and axiological aspects.

Finally, tawhîd should build the thinking foundation, methodology, and the practice in educational world.Therefore, we have to design a completely holistic and integrated educational concept. It is holistic in terms of vision, structure, process, and also its integrated approach to curriculum (how and what to be taught), the knowledge integrated with practice, application, and service. It emphasizes that the integrative aspect will significantly increase the power, relevance, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning experience.

5. Character education

The second domain to be reformed is the content of curriculum or what to be taught. Generally, the purpose of education is the transfer of knowledge. However, the real purpose is not only giving the information, but also developing the human resource itself. In western countries, people starts to realize the importance of character education. In United States, for example, recently the teacher, politician, and parent aware that it is urgently needed and it acts as a key component in school curriculum. Without it, the society has no warranty to feel safe and peace due to technology development.

The similar situation occurs in the society in the 21st century. They face the same question of what the role of education for national civilization is. Does the education only aim to transfer the knowledge? The education designer should be able to answer these fundamental questions. Looking the past experience, the education without character will produce people who tends to exploit both other people and the environment (ecology). Fourteen century ago, the prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reminded us that: "I was sent to perfect good character.", "The most perfect man in his faith among the believers is the one whose behaviour is most excellent". Therefore, the crisis experienced by Islamic society nowadays is the result of our failure in educating character. (In western countries, people starts to realize the importance of character education. In United States, for example, recently the teacher, politician, and parent aware that it is urgently needed and it acts as a key component in school curriculum. Without it, the society has no warranty to feel safe and peace due to technology development. Based on a research in Harvard University in United States, being success is not only determined by knowledge and technical ability (hard skill), but also by the ability to manage the human itself and others (soft skill).It reveals that hard and soft skill determine 20% and 80% of being success, respectively. In fact, the most success person in the world get their achievement due to their soft skill rather than their hard skill. It indicates that it is important to improve the quality of character education.)

The concept of akhlaq karîmah is often simply accepted and considered only as politeness. In fact, it covers making good deeds, including maintaining the balance in the universe such as the issue of ecology, human right, justice, democracy, and social gap. If people understand this, it can be a compulsory subject in any kind and level of educational institutions. We often understand the term al-adab as the politeness of students toward their teacher or the politeness of children toward their parent. The word adab itself has an extended meaning of ta'dib which means developing civilization. Therefore, it is impossible that the prophet is sent to perfect good character if it only means politeness. Furthermore, it simplify the real meaning of nubuwwah and risalah. It is a good character which is equal to Ihsān, the next stage after Islam and Iman

6. Conclusion

Education needs a comprehensive and conceptual design. The design and concept of education should be based on a belief that human development and transformation especially on his or her character is the main purpose of education. Therefore, the concept of education should develop a program which focuses on the character and value education. Furthermore, it emphasizes on the issue of self-identity, and also develops skills in communication and interpersonal relationship, trains public service and leadership, carries out the responsibility as caliph on earth. Thus, the education curriculum should be designed and built to fulfill the purposes.

Not only the written curriculum about the goal, content, and the material, but also the nonverbal one (hidden curriculum) which consists of role model (uswah dan qudwah) for teachers and leader. Therefore, their words and deeds should be a role model for others such as students and the people. The scientists and educational institutions stakeholders are responsible for bridging the gap between the value and practice in the educational world. For centuries, the education is considered as a transmission process rather than transformation process. The teaching only focuses on transferring information rather than carrying out and internalizing it. In the era of information and multimedia in which the internet and global communication becomes a trend, we should concern about the epistemology which prioritizes humanism value, especially in dealing with a modern and secular society today.

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