

CONCEPTUALIZING ISLAMIC BASED EDUCATION: An attempt toward Islamization of Educational System in Aceh

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Abstract

This study proves that Islam has a unique concept of education and constructive values that can be applied in educational system. Discussion on Islamic education has not ended yet; that is why to reveal the Islamic educational values deriving from the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunna (prophetic tradition), is not insignificant in the context of educational system in Aceh. Since Aceh has specific privilege in the fields of education, religion, and culture, it is crucial to break up earth the Islamic values and apply them into education programs. Realizing such programs should take accurate and strategic steps through islamization of education, integration of values, and internationalization of way of thinking. Besides, curriculum, method, system, policy, and dichotomy of educational system must be reformed concurrently.

Keywords: *Islamic education; Islamization; Curriculum*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa Islam memiliki sebuah konsep yang unik terkait dengan pendidikan dan tata nilai konstruktif yang dapat diaplikasikan ke dalam sistem pendidikan. Diskursus tentang pendidikan Islam memang belum selesai. Oleh sebab itu mengungkap nilai pendidikan Islam yang diambil dari sumber Islam, yaitu al-Qur'an dan Sunnah Rasulullah saw bukan bermakna tidak penting dalam konteks pengembangan system pendidikan di Aceh. Dikarenakan Aceh merupakan daerah yang memiliki otonomi khusus dalam bidang pendidikan, agama dan budaya, tentu saja membumikan nilai-nilai Islam dan mengimplementasikannya ke dalam program-program pendidikan merupakan hal yang sangat penting. Program-program sedemikian rupa tentu harus ditempuh melalui langkah-langkah yang akurat dan strategis melalui islamisasi pendidikan, integrasi nilai, serta internasionalisasi cara berpikir. Di samping itu, hal-hal lain terkait dengan kurikulum, metode, system, kebijakan, serta dikotomisasi sistem pendidikan juga tidak kalah penting diperbarui.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Islam; Islamisasi; Kurikulum*

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on Islamization of education have been largely expounded by experts since 1980-an; however, up to now, there is no clear concept of it has resulted. Talking about the Islamic education, it cannot be separated from the very basic values of it containing in the Qur'an and hadits and even in the codification of Islamic jurisprudence as a result of creative thinking of *ulama* (Muslim scholars). The purpose of this study is to divulge the concept of Islamic educational system matching with the existing educational system in Aceh province as a response to Provincial Government Regulation and Constitution of Government of Aceh Province. So far, the educational system carrying out in Aceh, nowadays, has not been reformed and reformulated yet while the constitution allows and acknowledges to implement it generously in the educational institutions. Meanwhile, no step and policy of the government have been taken to realize it practically.

In relation to Islamic values, Sayyid Quthb, a famous Muslim scholar from Egypt, enlightens that "Islam will be the religion of the future. In fact, this Islamic system is so comprehensive, interdependent and interwoven that it covers all aspects of human life and the various genuine needs of man as well as his different activities."¹ Based on this statement, it is clear that Islam has significant role in guiding mankind to be the most excellent among other creatures. In this case, it can be said that Islam is a way of life which contains the teachings of various aspects of human life, included education. In aspect of education, Islam has not mentioned explicitly about its system, methodology, and curriculum. All depend on the policy of human being.

Islamic education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should therefore provide for the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the

¹Sayyid Quthb, *Islam the Religion of the Future*, Kuwait: Sahaba Islamic Press, 1984, p. 6.

realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community, and humanity at large.²

DISCUSSION

Foundation of Islamic Education

Islam never claimed to be a new religion. It has always claimed to be the purified and perfected form of the religion which Allah had sent to earlier prophets for the spiritual, moral, and worldly guidance of human beings during their existence on the face of the earth. According to Islam, prophets are the chosen people of Allah through whom He had sent this guidance, as to how to worship Him, to all human habitations. But later followers deviated from this guidance, invented or forged false ideas or gods and started worshipping other gods and goddesses besides or along with God or became total secularists denying the existence of God and begin to worship themselves, wealth and power.³ On the contrary, the Qur'an pilots mankind to the right path with lucid hints to reach the happiness both in this world and in the Hereafter. There is no doubt that al-Qur'an is the main source of Islamic education. In addition to it, the prophetic tradition (*hadits*), and the result of ulama's thinking (*ijtihad*). Relating to regulation of educational system it seems *ijtihad* of ulama is more manifest than that of the primary sources.

The secret of the Qur'an, its purest essence and its ultimate aim consist in calling people to Allah so that by understanding it and following its message people's hearts are purified and they gain nearness to Allah, and enter heaven in the Hereafter. In order to attain this aim the Qur'an provides us with three messages. The first message is about Divine Nature. It consists firstly of verses that describe the transcendental essence of Allah, which are most difficult to understand and realize, although through love for Allah the believer is granted the ability to feel Divine Presence within and without. The second aspect of this message is about the attributes and qualities of Allah, such as His knowledge, power, life, speech, wisdom, hearing, and seeing. The third aspect of the message is about the works which are innumerable. As there is in truth nothing in

²See, *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996.

³Syed Ali Ashraf, "The Message and the Messenger" in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1995, p. 4.

existence except Allah and His works the bounds of His works cannot be ascertained by inquiry.⁴

The first message has given birth to different mystical, metaphysical and theological explanations. The second message is about the straight path through which human being is advised to proceed in order to attain nearness to Allah. This message is the source of the entire way of life prescribed by Allah, the *syari'ah* or divinely determined law for human advancement towards Allah. No aspect of human life is left out. The third message is about the condition of human being at the time of its attaining closeness to Allah and the condition of those who neglect the path. In support this, the Qur'an cites examples of those who have followed the path successfully such as the previous prophets and those who denied the path and had gone astray such as Namruz, Pharaoh, 'Ad, and Tsamud people. In order to understand the Qur'an and follow the path of spiritual attainment, Allah tells the believer to obey and follow the prophet. The principles in the Qur'an would have led to confusion and subjective interpretation leading to conflict among groups had not there been a person to show how to actualize the principles stated in the Qur'an.

Education is a social phenomenon and teaching is one of the social crafts, man or woman is a social animal and his prosecution of learning is conditioned by nature of the material, intellectual and spiritual forces of civilization in which he or she lives; man is distinguished from animals by a capacity to reason. His reasons guides him to make a living, to cooperate with other members of society and to accept what Allah has revealed through His prophets for man's welfare in this world and the next. Man is therefore a reasoning animal, and reasoning is the foundation for all learning. In addition, the process of learning reason enables the learner to grasp the meaning through the spoken and written word.⁵ Concisely speaking, the foundation of Islamic education encompass: the Qur'an, hadits (prophetic tradition), and *ijtihad* (creative thinking).

Islamizing Education: An Overview

The secular system of education was introduced into the Muslim world by colonial regimes in the name of modernism and progress. After independence, the

⁴Syed Ali Ashraf, "The Message...", p. 9.

⁵A.L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*, London: Luzac and Company Ltd., 1979, pp. 42-43.

government controlled educational institutions were more committed to secular objectives. The secular curricula was revised constantly to keep up with the needs of society, while religious education remained unchanged. Take, for example, Al-Azhar University, which has seen no change in its Islamic curriculum for several centuries. Partly because of conservatism and vested interests, and partly because of the secularists' plan to keep students and teacher of religion out of touch with reality and modernity so that they would present no threat to secular institutions, the *madrrasah* system was ignored and its curricula was left to stagnate and become irrelevant to modern concerns. During this same time, huge amounts of money were being spent by Muslim governments on the curricula, buildings, and libraries of the secular education system.

1. *Unifying Secular and Religious Education.* Al Faruqi favored the unification of both education systems. This was to be achieved by Islamizing the secular system and modernizing the religious system. He advocated the establishment of new Islamic studies department and colleges of shari'ah in secular universities, declaring them to be no more than sign of Muslim decadence and copies of oriental or religious studies departments in western universities. These new institutions would be supported by religious endowment (*waqaf*) funds, which would allow them to remain independent of the government and was also the norm in the days when Muslim ruled themselves. In addition, due to existing economic realities, a portion of public funds would be added to those of the *waqaf* in order to make ends meet. Educators should be free to teach and decide how to run the academic institutions. And, most importantly, all Muslim elementary and secondary students would be taught by Muslim teachers and not by missionaries or non-Muslim, as the case today.⁶

2. *Instilling the Islamic Vision.* If our present education system has no aim or purpose, part of the blame must be put on teachers. After the mother, they play a basic role in the development of a child's mind. Due the lack of Islamic commitment and vision, al-Faruqi called the educators of the Muslim world like people without culture or cause.

⁶ Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization...*, pp. 5-6.

Knowledge is not neutral and, therefore, those who possess it cannot be neutral. There can be no genuine search for knowledge without spirit. It is precisely this spirit that cannot be copied. University buildings and offices, libraries and laboratories, classrooms and auditoria have little value if there is no underlying vision to guide them. Al Faruqi said that it is the vision, the commitment of the western scholar, that has given life to the university. Although the Muslim world's universities lack many of the material facilities of their western counterparts, the main obstacle is not material but rather the Muslim educator's lack of vision. They have neither the vision of Islam nor that of the West. Using old textbooks, they have neither the time nor the need to equip themselves or broaden their knowledge so that they can be on the same levels as their western counterparts. Their students are even less qualified and motivated. Over time, Muslim standards of education decline and the western education available in its institutions becomes a caricature of its western prototype.⁷

The greatest calamity of the Muslim world is the existence of so many teachers without any Islamic vision. A Muslim student who enters a college or a university has no accurate knowledge of Islam. Whatever he has learned at home or school has given an emotional, as opposed to a correct intellectual or ideological, attachment to Islam. These sentiments and emotions are shipwrecked when confronted with the ideas, facts, and the objective judgment of science he faces within modern disciplines. Unable to defend himself and without a vision, he will most likely graduate as a confirmed atheist, secularist, communist, or at least, with his view of the Islam having retreated into the realm of personal, subjective, and sentimental attachment to family and people.⁸

The first step should be endeavored to reform the educational system in Aceh is Islamization of education itself. The development of education in Aceh, up to now, has no specific characteristics and no uniformity as well. This is caused by the influence of colonialism mainly during the Dutch occupation in Aceh. Previously, the educational system in Aceh was Islamic based. Looking at this phenomenon, it is nice to take efforts to return the educational system to be as it was. In connection

⁷Vide, Muhammad Shafiq, *The Growth of Islamic Thought in North America: Focus on Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi*, Brentwood, Maryland, USA: Amana Publications, 1994, p. 96.

⁸ Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization...*, p. 8.

with this context, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas asserts, “Islamization is the liberation of man first from magical, mythological, animistic, national-cultural tradition, and then from secular control over this reason and his language.⁹ By freeing oneself from what is magical and secular, one develops a proper self-understanding towards knowledge. In the eyes of al-Attas, knowledge is the discipline of body, mind, and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one’s proper place in relation to one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials. To him, recognition and acknowledgement of the right and proper place, station and condition of life, and to self-discipline in positive and willing participation in enacting one’s role in accordance with that recognition and acknowledgement, its actualization in one and in society as a whole reflects the condition of justice, which is as a reflection of wisdom.¹⁰

Briefly, knowledge is very fundamental aspect in Islamic education through which the personality of students can be actualized. In addition, the Qur’an again and again mentions the importance of knowledge in the life of Muslim. The Prophet Muhammad, even, states that one of criteria of iman is good behavior. This value is almost loss in education system today. We need moral value in running education and there is a firm system in applying it in reality. The teachers should be responsible for character building of human being so that there is no violence and brutality in social life. Since the values of morality tend to degrade, it is indispensable to reactualize in order to be remembered and comprehended by people in modern age. We expect it will come true some day when many people disregard the significance of morality in every field of life.

In essence, Islamization of language and thought ought to constitute the guiding principle of those who want to interpret the primary sources of Islamic education. This means that interpretation does not merely reside with those who have made a dispassionate study of the primary sources. It is in this sense the teachings of the Qur’an must be reinterpreted in accordance with the development of time; and even be suitable with the need of human life. That is why, the scope of Islamic teaching comprises all aspects of life: economic, political, and social life; not only in relation between human and Allah. In this context, Islam has put the

⁹Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1985, p. 173.

¹⁰Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam...*, p. 22.

universal basis of knowledge. In other words, there is no dichotomy of knowledge in Islam at all. This contradicts to the common opinion emerging among common people such as religious and secular knowledges in academic approach.

However, a new foundation of first principles, which are in harmony with the universalism of Islam, must be established. In addition, a new axiology based on the guiding principles of Islamic values and goals must be adopted. To get this process started, Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi suggested that the following interdependent steps be taken simultaneously, Islamizing the educational institutions by uniting the two system of education, i.e. religious and secular, instilling the Islamic vision in the teachers through training the in Islamic concepts and principles, and Islamizing the curricula by providing Islamically correct textbooks.¹¹

In this sense, al-Faruqi did not consider carefully about the development and the change of time in which the Islamic education faces such a change. Thus, inevitably Islamic education should be run by adapting its substance to situation and condition. The issues of human rights, democracy, modernization, globalization, the progress of science and technology, communication technology, freedom of women, and pluralism should be put into consideration as policy of Islamic education. Accordingly, the Islamic educational system does not leave behind; it can even be able to anticipate and participate in variety of obstacles in the future. In this relevance, the Islamic education must take a participative approach in its system.

The Principles of Islamic Methodology

Later on, al-Faruqi propounded some principles of Islamic methodology that can be applied in educational system. According to al-Faruqi, our educational system as well as our thinking process has been affected by modernization which yields the emergence of dualism. Al-Faruqi then advocated adoption of the following methodology:¹²

- I. *The unity of Allah.* In Islamic thought, Allah is the first and ultimate cause and end of everything. To be Muslim is to have Allah constantly present in on's conciousness. To be Islamic means to do everything as He has directed

¹¹ See, Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan*, Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1982, p. 38.

¹² Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization...*, pp. 22-33.

and for His sake alone. Islamic knowledge recognizes that there is no being, truth, or value outside the chains and complexes of same in which Allah is the cause and the end, but immediate and ultimate. Furthermore, whatever is conceived, known, or evaluated outside of the divinely ordained nexus is nonexistent, false, value-free, or merely misrepresented as standing outside the nexus.

2. *The unity of creation.* The concept of the unity of Allah leads logically to unity of creation. Allah created everything and therefore His creation stands before Him as an integral whole fulfilling the cosmic order or the law of nature. This creation is not without purpose. The whole world system is irrelated and intelinked in such a way that it constitutes as single telic system that is vibrant, alive, and full of meaning at the same time. The Qur'an informs us many times that all of creation, which itself is Allah's gift to mankind, has been made subservient to him and is for his enjoyment and comfort. Scientists are obligated to explore the treasures of Allah's creation and to use it for the benefit of mankind.
3. *The unity of truth and knowledge.* As for the theory of knowledge, the position of Islam can be best described as the unity of truth. This unity devolves from Allah's absolute unity and is convertible with it. As the truth (*al-Haqq*) is one of the names of Allah, al-Faruqi claimed that since Allah is one there can only be one truth. This logical equivalence of reason, truth and reality with the facts of revelation is the most critical principle that epistemology has ever known and is based on the principles underlying all Islamic knowledges:
 - a. The unity of truth prescribes that no claim on behalf of revelation may be made that runs counter to reality. The propositions that the revelation is supposed to teach must correspond with reality.
 - b. The unity of truth prescribes that no contradiction or variation between reason and revelation is ultimate. In one's investigation of nature, it is possible to make mistakes or fall under illusions. However, the unity of truth demands that the investigator reconsider and reinvestigate the data, for the cause of discrepancy may well be in the findings of reason or in the understanding of the revelation.

- c. The unity of truth prescribes that no inquiry into the nature of creation or any part of it may be considered as concluded. The patterns of Allah in creation are infinite. No matter how deeply we go, there is always tentative and retains its validity only until new evidence has questioned, refuted, or verified it. The highest wisdom and the most certain pronouncement must always be followed with the affirmation that “and Allah knows better.” This statement indicates that mankind has no ultimate power to understand and reveal anything secret behind the universe.

The unity of life. This element consists of the following points:

1. *The Divine Trust.* The Qur’an informs mankind that the divine trust was offered to heavens, the earth, and all other parts of creation, but that only mankind accepted it. In recognition of this fact, Allah told the angels to prostrate before Adam, the first man.
2. *Khilafah.* Man’s bearing of the divine trust resulted in his being appointed the vicegerent (*khalifah*) of Allah. Thus, he is now responsible for fulfilling the moral laws. The purpose of the divine trust and of the *khilafah* as well is to develop culture and civilization. That is why Islam has associated khilafah with the establishment of political order, economic welfare, peace and security throughout the world. Islam does not condemn life and history and therefore there is no division of religious and secular in Islam.
3. *Comprehensiveness.* The will of Islam to culture and civilization is comprehensive. Every element of an Islamic life must be made clear and convincing, as this is a prerequisite for the development of Islamic culture and civilization. The areas of social intercourse, travel, transportation, recreation, the audio and visual arts, mass communication are in great need of being made relevant in Islamic terms.

The unity of humanity. All humans are equal in Allah’s eyes. The only element that distinguishes them from each other is their deeds, which are manifested in their moral virtue and cultural or civilizational achievements. Islam stands for universalism. It recognizes the division of people into tribes and nations for purpose of identity alone, just like present-day passports or identity cards,

according to al-Faruqi. He viewed ethnocentrism as equal to polytheism and a Muslim nationalist as a hypocrite or a non-Muslim pretending to be a Muslim.

In connection with the above mentioned case, according to al-Attas, our present general dilemma is caused by: first, confusion and error in knowledge; later on, loss of *adab* within the community; eventually, the rise of leaders who are not qualified for valid leadership of Muslim community, who do not possess the high moral, intellectual, and spiritual standards required for Islamic leadership. All these roots of our general dilemma are interdependent and operate in a vicious circle.¹³ In fact, deislamization is the infusion of alien concepts into the minds of Muslims, where they remain and influence thought and reasoning.

Islamic Values in Education

Enhancing the quality of education, especially in Aceh, needs deep analysis due to education will continuously develop. That is why it is urgent to interleave the Islamic values in educational system comprehensively. The values encompass spiritual, intellectual, social, individual, economic, political, modernity, and international peace and understanding.¹⁴ In context of spirituality, the objective of Islamic education is to develop and cultivate an awareness of the integrated nature of Islamic *weltanschauung*, the respective position and relationship of its various components to one another. Concerning intellectuality having knowledge of facts, principles, and theories of various scientific, historical, socio-anthropological, psychological and religious fields and interpret and synthesize them within the unitary world-view of Islam.

The social value will ensure the continuation of social institutions and spirit, such as the establishment of a strong family unit, socio-economic justice, promotion of educational, moral and spiritual development of the community, the practice of consultation (*musyawarah*), and other skills. In this case, education is concerned with developing the unique characteristics of human being so that he will be able to adapt to the standards of the society that shares with him the very

¹³ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999, pp. 33-34.

¹⁴ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam*, London and New York: Mansell, 1989, pp. 99-102.

same ideals. Such harmony is the first characteristic of Islamic educational aims.¹⁵ As to political value, it will develop in the individual understanding and acceptance of democratic ideas under constitution, commitment and responsibility. Next, modernity can develop the individual a positive attitude towards scientific enquiry and technical process and progress, self-reliance, desire and capability for life-long education to enable someone to initiate and adapt to changes compatible with the cultural and ethical values and aspirations of the nation. Lastly, promoting international peace and understanding in the individual through the study of other nations from geographical, historical, sociological, economic and political perspectives. Besides, understanding and appreciation of international effort toward peace and cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Education is a process of instilling values into human beings progressively. As a result, education should include, at least, four main elements: *firstly*, process (system, method, content, curriculum, environment and ultimate goal); *secondly*, instilling values (Islamic values based on the Qur'an and hadiths); *thirdly*, human being (education focuses its target on men and women, thus it can be conducted by everyone, everywhere, and whenever); and *fourthly*, progress (education must have a specific goal or objective; and must be progressive in following the change of time). It is time for Aceh to expand and implement a new and uniform educational system all over Aceh region as a response to acknowledgment of the Islamic law legally or constitutionally.

Nevertheless, uniformity of educational system into one system, to eliminate dichotomy tendency, secular and religious systems, to be the only one system of education, the Islamic education, at all levels of institutions, is the most important step to be taken into consideration. Islamic educational system can be applied effectively if there is strongly mutual support and cooperation among family, school, community, and government.

It is golden opportunity for Acehnese community to create and enhance quality of education by instilling Islamic values, based on the Qur'an, sunna, and ijtihad in curricula at all levels of education. Since Aceh is admitted as a specific

¹⁵See Yusuf Waghid, "Why a Theory of Islamic Education Cannot be Epistemologically "Neutral", in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1996, p.49.

province in Indonesia, it has a freedom to implement its regulations to promote the quality of education as it will. By conducting this, Aceh will someday be an excellent province from which other provinces go after or take an ideal model of education. Through Islamic educational system, Aceh can accelerate to achieve the ultimate goal of education, creating civilized men in this world.

The learning process of Islamic values should be started from the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. The very basic values of Islamic education which will be applied in the curricula are: how to understand and to live together in the context of globalization era; to widen horizon of thinking, to take part in social life actively, to create a harmony life with other nations in the world, to build positive thinking, and uproot xenophobia attitude.

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