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## **CHILD EDUCATION: RETURNING THE NATURE OF PARENTS AS AN EARLY EDUCATOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to discuss the importance of the role of parents as an educator from an Islamic point of view. In other words, it is desirable to restore the task of the parent as an early educator before the children are handed over to the school system. This is because home institutions and parenting are the core of the development of a civilization. In this advanced and highly complicated world, it has not only transformed human civilization through the achievement of advancement in science and technology, it has even changed the way of human life. The changes have a good and positive impact and also at the same time a bad and negative impact on the traditional system of society itself. Even the traditional values that previously were the core of our civilization as an Eastern society is also affected and eradicated.

**Keywords:** child education, Islamic education, school system, parenting

### **INTRODUCTION**

“The beginning of every government starts with the education of our youth.” –

**Pythagoras**

In the context of education, there is no doubt that parents are the first teachers while families and homes are the first schools for children before they were sent to school. But after globalization struck in every inch region in the world, there has been a change in the structure of the human community and it indirectly affects parenting functions. The function of parents as educators is getting lost due to the narrowness of life that forced them to come out of the house to find and increase their income in order to cover the cost of family life. As a result, the child education is neglected. Children that should get early education from their own parents have to be handed over to the school system to educate them.

There is a misunderstanding among current parents in the matter of educating children. Generally, they consider that education is the responsibility of teachers in school because school is the institution that is responsible for educating their children.

But unnoticed, there are actually two terms which should be taken seriously, "teaching" and "education". Many parents consider "teaching" and "education" as two identical terms. It is not surprising why most of the parents do not take seriously in this case. They think that when they have sent their children to school then the task is finished. But the truth is not really.

Normally, schools work as a teaching center to deliver knowledge to make children smart and clever. Smart and clever to calculate, think, interact with peers, how to socialize and etcetera. Although moral aspects are taught in schools it is not the same as the guidance and education from families or parents. In other words, the process of teaching and learning from school will not be the same as the process of education at home. Home education under the supervision of parents is more effective in order to form the moral of religious and high-cultural character. If parents neglect moral education at home, then the dream to see the child become a moral man will definitely fail. While the school is more focusing on pursuing academic excellence. Achievement of excellence in academic becomes the goal of the school. The busyness of the school to achieve the best results in the examination among students led to the possibility of neglect in the moral education. Even some schools are direct beyond the moral education of students because the schools are more emphasizing the academic excellence of the students for the good sake of schools only.

Accordingly, when schools fail to play a role as agents of change then the task of educating children to become a moral person is the parents' duty. The effectiveness of education from parents to make children have noble personalities is much better than the education from schools. This is because parents are the first and most practical educator to educate children compared to schools or maid.

The failure of parents to take care and to give perfect education in accordance with religious references is one of the causes of social problems such as wild and immoral children, crimes in teenagers and so on. Handed the task of educating children to others is an act that violates the parenting nature (please refer the explanation from **Masaru Ibuka** and other scholars below). Therefore, to avoid the occurrence unwanted various of social problems, it is recommended that the task of educating the children to be returned to parents of their original nature.

This paper is just a small effort based on writers' reading and experience. Hence, there are many passages in this paper that the authors deliberately write to show the attention of every nation's scholars in dealing with children's education issues. In addition, we can also see that there are many similarities about the issue of children and proves that the problem of child education is a global issue.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to Hamka, education builds the characters (1998:229). Meanwhile, nowadays education systems only focusing on making educated students without having good characters. Mahatma Gandhi once said that “education without character”. Besides, nowadays almost all education systems are more to exam oriented or in other words, the study only to pass the examination and using the certificate for work.

In fact, our education systems nowadays tend to create students with high expertise in the certain field. In other words, to create ‘a graduated manpower’. Then the expertise will be used to subdue others and control them to gain profit for themselves and their people. Now I would like to say the words of Dr. Seksan Praserkul, a social activist, thinker and former Thai academic, said that:

“... before this, most of us only teach falsehoods, we do not teach the real thing (*al-haq*). The average course we teach is a hegemony science. For instance, how to deceive consumers into purchasing our manufactured goods as much as possible, how to take foreign workers at the lowest cost and how to dominate others. These sciences are falsehoods as they separate from pure values. Any knowledge that attempts to separate the beauty of life as human beings, then it will turn into falsehood ...” (Pajarayasara, 2006: 52)

On the contrary, if we properly observed, it can be seen that the true education philosophy is to avoid the ignorance. In this case, **Prof. Dr. Sidek Baba** said that “education is not just an information, knowledge, skills and training. But the information also needs to conform according to Quran and Sunnah.” (Sidek Baba, 2006: 21)

### **Under the Influence of Secularism**

The fact that today, we undeniably live under the shadow of the influence of secularism. The influences of secularism are widespread that almost all-region in the world is subject to it. This situation makes the entire humanity, both directly and indirectly, tend to be controlled by the secularism. According to **Fritjof Capra** in his book *The Turning Point*, secularism dominates the human mind is the root cause of the dualism of thought in almost all areas of knowledge and social life. Through his important work, Fritjof Capra carefully describes how secularism enters into human life and affects their views.

Secularism may be common for Westerners as well as other people who have dualism tradition between religious life and the world. But it is not the case with the Muslim community. This is because the teachings of Islam never separate worldly life and the hereafter. In fact, it is always embedded into a package of practices along the way of life. And this also certainly includes in educational affairs.

The entry of the secularism puts the Islamic society in a state of discomfort and anxiety. To be exact, secularism puts Muslim in an endless dilemma (For more details, please refer *Islam dan Sekularisme* by Syed Muhammad Naquib AL-Attas). This condition is not only experienced by the Muslim community in the East but also in the West itself. Western Muslim lived within secularism and liberalism culture have to work harder to ensure that their children can live their lives as usual under the influence of secularism and liberalism

The anxiety and willingness of the Muslim community in the West in dealing with this issue can be study more for further details by reading papers which are “*Pendidikan Islam Kanak-kanak Islam di Barat dan Masalah Kurikulum dan Sukatan Pelajaran*” by Afzarul Rahman and another one “*Pendidikan Agama untuk Kanak-kanak Islam di Great Britain: Garis Panduan dan SUkatan Pelajaran*” by Syed Ali Ashraf. Both papers are published in the book *Kurikulum dan Pendidikan Guru* (DBP: 1992). The interesting part is the result of the study of these two papers show evidence of the efforts made by Western Muslim societies in dealing with the flow of secularism and liberalism among the rising generation that is further away from the roots of the Islamic tradition. The efforts were done with the fact that they had to mingle around

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with Western society that practicing the philosophy of secularism. There is no doubt that some Muslim parents are impressed by the European / Western civilization and they did not take any action about it. They even accept Western / European culture without any slightest sense. They are willing to scarify their self-identity to become a part of Europe / Western. To avoid from secularism in the middle of Western society is totally impossible. They were forced to confront with wisdom, like the Malay proverb “like pulling the hair from a pot of flour, the hair should not snap and the flour should not be scattered”.

Other than secularism, other genres of secularism and liberalism such as rationalism, agnosticism, and empiricism are not less influential in Western society's living system. These philosophical flows emphasize on applied or utilitarian aspects. In another word, these philosophical streams emphasized more on physical and empirical aspects, and at the same time directly ignore spiritual aspects altogether. **Sidek Baba** once said that "the focus is more on the development of cognitive or intellectual aspects" (ibid., 25) and this is the cause of the problem as too much emphasis to materialism and to let the lust of self to forget about halal and haram. In other words, the imbalance in the education system has become the cause of many endless problems.

### **The Philosophy of Islamic Education System**

In the Islamic education system has declared that there is no dichotomy between the knowledge of self-management or the God-given knowledge (*naqli*) with the knowledge of managing system or The acquired knowledge (*aqli*). Hence, the goal of Islamic education is to create a balanced development within individuals with Islamic values. (Abdul Rahman Aroff et al.:1987:57)

The aim of Islamic education is to produce good human beings. However, the system of secularism and liberalism which has a different direction from the Islamic education make schools and institutions are more likely to produce excellent human beings in the academic field and the measure of their success are depends on the academic level. Thus, most people are learning just to obtain certificates only. This condition resulting in young people, and including parents, are involved with a kind of epidemic called ‘diploma disease’ which is a hasty pursuit of obtaining a certificate, not

because of its internal educational value but the economic value and social dignity that may be obtained through it. (incited Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1997: 118-119).

According to **Saodah Abd. Rahman**, "academic wisdom cannot be measured into individual's work if the education system is not balanced between spiritual and religious education." (Utusan Malaysia, 8 April 2008). This view of Saodah Abd. Rahman is supported with what has been revealed by Buya Hamka who states that "brain intelligence does not guarantee salvation if religious spiritual values are not grounded (Hamka, 1998: 230).

In short, in our quest to create a noble superior person in accordance with Islamic education policy it is unlikely that this great task would be left to the school alone, as schools are more emphasis on teaching and not education. Teaching fails to produce superior personal human beings. Therefore, this task is fulfilled by education, especially Islamic education because only religious education can produce good human beings.

### **The Parent's Nature as an Early Educator**

To achieve the educational goals of the Islamic education philosophy such as the above description, parents need to play on their role. It is not practical if the task completion is given to teachers or schools only. Because the parent's role as educators is far more important in the children's education itself. **Rasulullah PBUH** said: Every child is born in a state of fitrah (as a Muslim), but both parents make him a Jew, or a Christian and a believer. "In another hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said," the paradise is located beneath the footprints of the mother, "The pieces from the two hadiths are enough to prove the importance of the parent's role in educating children in order to growth the children in religious care. In other words, parents must intervene in building children's character and personalities. And this task cannot be hand over to the school only.

### **A Few Intellectual World Scholar View**

If we look at the overall development of the world's civilization, the intellectuals of every nation are of the same view about the children's education which in general

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they agree that the education of children depends largely on the care of both parents. In other words, the parenting aspect in educating children is very significant. To raise children in order to form, a good and useful citizen then the role of the parents and the environment is irreplaceable.

The writers state a few of the world's intellectual and major scholar's view on the importance of children's education for civilization below. In this context, we also do not deny the role of parents who also have a substantial share of contributions to the education of children.

**1) Al-Ghazali (1058-1111)**

*Al-Imam Hujjatul Islam* Al-Ghazali is the great scholar who has produced many scientific works in his effort to convey knowledge to mankind. Among of his magnificent works are such as *Ihya'ulumuddin* (The Book of Knowledge), *Munqidh min al-dalal* (Deliverance from Error and the beginning of Guidance), *Tahafut al-Falasifah* and many more works which have become references to all knowledge seeker. However, as the ultimate thinker who has produced dozens of scientific, religious and suftistic works, he also does not neglect his duties as a thinker in the education of children. This is proven by the appearance of *Ayyuhal Walad's* which means "My Beloved Son". This book specifically addresses on how to educate children.

With the advent of this *Ayyuhal Walad* book, it proved that how much Imam Al-Ghazali is concerned about children's issues as the heir of the nation's continuity and religion. The continuity of a civilization depends on their existence. If their personality is broken then it is a sign of a civilization being towards the worst generation. This can be seen through the word that has been said by Saidina Umar Al-Khattab, which is "if you want to see the future of a nation, you can predict it through the morality of youth on that time."

Hence, the book that has been written by Imam Al-Ghazali is full of advice for young children. The book wants to remind all the Muslims to take care of their children's and educate them with the real values of Islam that based on Al-Quran and Hadith. A real knowledge will prevent them from influenced by a wrong ideology and also can guide them to a correct path of life. Furthermore, a child is a gift from a god to parents, so that they can protect and take care of children with wholeheartedly. Even

though, a children also a first priority and responsibility for parents in their life (Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, 1990: 77).

2) **Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)**

This French top thinker has a big influence on French civilization particularly, and a world civilization generally. The impact of his thinking on politics and philosophy was very big. **Seyyed Hossein Nasr** in his book titled A young Muslim's Guide to The Modern World (1994), state that "... the influence of Rousseau was great not only in the philosophical field but also in practical political movements especially the French Revolution, and he was also highly admired by a number of the founders of the United States. Likewise, Rousseau's educational ideas wielded much influenced and have been discussed by many Muslim educators during the past century."

In this context of the discussion, Rousseau had produced a book, titled Emile that discusses an education. The title of the book which is Emile was referring to Rousseau favorite child. In this book, Rousseau bravely giving an opinion about children education. Rousseau aloud in given detail description about educational process and strategy that the country should execute. He also criticized a moderns women that do not want to take a full responsibility for taking care of their children but giving that accountability to the maid to handle it. If this scenario was increasing in the society, then the community is going towards the destruction of their youth morality in the future (Rousseau, 2011:47).

The following sentence is the words of Rousseau in his argument about modern women and their lifestyle.

Women nowadays, not want to breastfeed their own children because they thought that breastfeed have a negative impact on their body. Despite the fact that, breastfeeding is indeed a duty that needs to be borne by women itself. I am quite a sympathy for this phenomenon that happens today, however, is it right for women to turn away to this task? They try so hard to get away from taking responsibility for this heavy duty. This deeds will affect human ethics. Indeed, breasts are a gift given by God to women for benefit of future generations. If true the women are so, then it is an indication of the destruction of the human race in the future. This is a sign indicating that the continent of Europe is heading towards the destruction of morality amongst people..."

Among the reasons why Rousseau does not agree with the culture of surrendering a child to the babysitter because he fears that the act will destroy the formation of the high quality of human beings. In his book, he emphasizes how important neat care should be done to a child in order to construct their manners and morality. The intended care meant by Rousseau is included environmental, cultural, nutrition and social matters. This shows how much Rousseau is concerned about the education of children. He emphasized that the education and affection of both parents, families, cultural and social factors are important in the context of childhood education.

This shows that Rousseau strongly embraces the act that violating the nature of femininity in the context of childcare. In fact, Rousseau considers it as cruel if a mother does not want to breastfeed her own child. This shows that Rousseau is very concerned about child care issues among mothers. Abandonment of children will result in moral impairment in society.

### 3) **Za'ba** (1895-1973)

In discussing on how to create a person with kind-hearted based on Islamic teachings, Za'ba through his book *Mencari Keluhuran Budi* (DBP: 1992) has written a special chapter on the role of parents in educating their children correctly. He is very serious about the role of parents in this issue. Not even outrageous if it is said that in order to create the noble virtue of a person the key is lying in parent education at home. Look at Hanafi's character in the novel *Salah Asuhan* by Abdul Moes. He thinks that one's character and personality are shaped by the guidance and influence of the surrounding culture. The moral collapse of a person is not caused by a mother, but the guidance. Home is the first school in creating human characters. Therefore, if parents fail to play their role as educators in teaching morality to children then it will be just a dream to make their children a noble person.

Based on his writing it is clearly shown that Za'ba really emphasizes education at home under the responsibility of both parents in educating their son. The importance of education at home is far more important than in school. In this issue, he thinks that:

Parents need to show a good example of their children so that they can practice a good behavior in life based on what they see from their parent at home. The good or bad behavior that the children have depends on how parents teaching them because home is the first place where children

gain their word in their life. Home is the first school in creating human characters and a place where children learn to manage their self preferably in order to face this world. A parent is a person that is responsible to be the first teacher for their children. School is the place where the kids learn on how to write, read, and count and others knowledge, it only counts as the second school for them because home is their first school. education and guidance manner that consists of the house, there is no decent or there is no good, hence this would make him 'rude', less trustworthy, bribes, and so on. As soon as he grows up, because of this kind of teaching and behavior that he gets somewhat from the words and good examples of teachers in schools. It would be really hard for him not to be helped by more educations and good examples for a long time as he associates at home."

Za'ba also thinks that in this kind of world, it is demanding parent's skill in bringing up children so that they would not exclude from a religious foundation, and besides having an appearance in worldly affairs. Strictly, it proves that Za'ba sensitiveness towards parent's role as the main mechanism in creating a perfect person that comes from the root of religious tradition. If both of the parents fail to play the roles appropriately based on what they have been entrusted or both parents intentionally neglected their important roles, so certainly, the objectives to create 'excellent human' would not be achieved although their children got an excellent result in examination.

#### **4) Hamka (1908-1981)**

Besides two intellectuals, Hamka also shared the same thoughts. He encourages the parents to keep on supporting each other in giving education towards their children. According to Hamka (1998: 231), it is improper to let those teachers take full responsibility in educating their children. In fact, it will become one big mistake if the role and trust in educate the children would be fully handled by the school :

The parent's abilities in teaching their children to become teacher's helper. On the contrary, if the children are being ignored by the parents, and handed over the teachers, they thought the teachers would lead and they would act like 'foolish time' and for what they have wished are rarely happen.

The anxiety of Hamka regarding this matter is because of at school there is only teaching and not really educating. Even though there is educating, it is only the education that is wrong and losing personally. Here, it shows that how an attitude and

perception of Hamka related to children's education. It can be concluded that there must be a relationship between school and parents to ensure that the children's education will continuously not just in one-sided only.

Hamka sensitiveness towards the issues of children education as we can see more clearly in the series of the story of the prophets and apostle which is published in the 'Weekly Children Magazine: Si Kuncung'. The purposes of this story writing of the prophets and the apostle are mere to educate and to give a lesson towards children about the story of the prophets and the apostle. Therefore, it is no wonder if Hamka uses the term 'my grandchild' in each of the paragraphs. The use of term 'my grandchildren' shows that he is interacting directly with the children. What most important is, from the series story of the prophet and the apostle that has been published become a proof of the Hamka's sensitiveness in the issues of children religion education.

#### 5) **Masaru Ibuka** (1908-1997)

Masaru Ibuka is a former honorary chairman and founder of the biggest company in Japan which is Sony. He has produced a particular book that talks about children's education. The book's titled '*Yochien Dewa Ososugiru* (Kindergarten is Too Late)' become one of the bestsellers and has been translated into a few world's main languages.

Japan is well known for its culture and tradition as a highly disciplined human being. In fact, it can be considered that Japanese is quite a synonym for discipline. Discipline has enlivened inside Japanese's character. It has been thought not only at their school but also in their house. Based on the article written by Haidar Najiyah Ibrahim that has been published in 'Utusan Malaysia' the 13<sup>th</sup> edition September 2017 titled 'The Ways Japanese Create Human Capital' clearly showed the achievement of Japanese in producing a workforce that comes within a good discipline that has been planted by their family and the school. Regarding Haidar Najiyah Ibrahim "teaching discipline is the main key to their early education" (Utusan Malaysia, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007).

In his book, Masaru Ibuka has written on one topic out of 87 which titled "**No more important task to women than to care for children**". He even disagrees with any school system that attempts to isolate the educational tradition of the education

curriculum. According to him, the children's education is the most significant educational activity. The child should have priority over anything else. He said, "if there are other things that are supposed to be more important than a child, why is he born? (Masaru Ibuka, 2007:129). In this regard, he stressed that "the most responsible person to care for the child is not a father, teacher, or sister but a mother who gave birth to her". In other words, the person most ideally fit to educate children is the woman/mother.

What can be explained from Masaru Ibuka's writing is that awareness of educating the children must start from home again. If there is among parents who believe that teaching children about morals or morals should wait for them to go to school, because it is supposed to be in the school a proper place to teach about discipline and where to process the personal development of children, according to Masaru Ibuka it is too late because the education to build the character and the children's personalities must start at home again, being educated by the mother. Do not expect the school to do this because if it is in school it is too late.

### **CONCLUSION**

The task of caring for and raising children is not easy work. Giving it lightly in this matter is not fair. Furthermore, if these assignments and responsibilities are handed over to non-members they will not succeed. Likewise in the matter of handover of child care to others, and not to his mother is very much wrong with the true nature. It is even an abuse of the children themselves. Any act that violates nature is bound to go towards destruction.

Children are the most valuable state assets. They will inherit and create new civilizations in the future. If they are not properly educated according to traditional and religious values it will impair the system. To realize this mission, parents are not supposed to be excluded at all. This is because the function of mothers as educators has been acknowledged by many intelligent people. Even Islam also believes that the development of the mother (family) is very influential in shaping the character of the child. Nothing is more appropriate in the care of children than in mothers. As the English adage says "the hand that swings the cradle will shake the world".

If we think about child custody we are actually thinking about a task in shaping the future pattern of the nation as well as religion. The continuity of the country's future depends largely on the personality of today's children. While the personality of the children depends on the pattern of education given to them. Hence, the future of the nation can be predicted based on the character and personality of the children today. Finally, I ended this discussion with the words **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** who once said: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

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