

TALK 1

INDONESIA

What is the True Aim of Education?

Western Secular civilization seeks to eliminate the Islamic revelation as the supreme authority on knowledge in the education system for their colonial interests. The secularization of knowledge has served as a hidden enemy against the Muslims, undermining the Islamic faith and identity of the *Ummah*. And the civilization created by Islam and based on the *Shariah* has faded and been replaced by the western materialistic civilization.

Yet a sound educational system cannot be built WITHOUT clarity in initially understanding, what should be the purpose of education and how education outcomes will benefit society and civilization. When this initial understanding - as an upstream issue – has been answered clearly, then the downstream issues such as policy, subjects taught, teaching methods and so on, will be shaped upon this objective. This is the correct approach and not the reverse, adopted by most Muslim countries who focus on downstream and technical issues without clear vision of the aim of education.

The Foundations of the Education Curriculum in the Khilafah written by Hizb ut Tahrir – states that education should be a method of keeping the Islamic ideology and *thaqofah* (culture) in the heart of Muslim children because *thaqofah* is actually the backbone of the existence and sustainability of a nation. *Thaqofah* builds a civilization and determines its targets and objectives, thus making its way of life differ from other nations. If this Islamic *thaqofah* is erased, then the Ummah's identity will end, its way of life will fade, its loyalties will be changed, and its history will sink behind other nations.

Therefore, this talk will not address general educational problems such as the debate of the curriculum, the quality of students, or the lack of educational facilities. Those various aspects have been too often discussed in hundreds of seminars and conferences. However, this talk will focus on the more **fundamental damage, namely "the damage caused by adopting the wrong purpose for education" for this stands as the major cause of the worst crisis of education** throughout Muslim countries and even the world in general.

Secularism infects the aim of education in the Muslim world

Secularization of knowledge in the education system today has caused an enormous impact on the Ummah. In the Arab world - the heart of the Islamic world, the Western colonialists deliberately tied the term secularism with the root word '*al-'ilm*' (knowledge) through its association with the term '*Ilmaaniyah*' (secularism in the Arabic language) to promote the secular Aqeedah which is completely contrary to Islam. This was in order to make the Arabic term for secularism represent modern knowledge which needed to be developed and adopted. This is really a great deception because the original word 'secularism' in their language (English) is in no way connected to the word 'knowledge'. Rather, it is representative of a comprehensive erroneous idea about the human being, the universe and life that is adopted by the West.

The impact of this deception is immense. The education systems in Muslim countries became infected by liberal values and secularism. Then consequently, the intellectuals became separated from the Ummah because they found it hard to understand the problem of

the Ummah due to the loss of Islamic political thought, and adoption of secular scientific thinking, and Western scientific methods.

This process of secularization was paired with the capitalist ideology, and together they became the key drivers of the modern world of education today, thus causing the development of pragmatism in education, which is reflected in a hyper-materialistic - purpose of education. This was far from the goal to develop knowledge and improve the quality of personalities.

That's why this era, although called '*The Age of Abundant Knowledge*' by Professor James Duderstadt, was unable to solve humanitarian, economic, moral, political, and social crises. Science and technology production today has an incredible pace, but is incompetent to create a better world. Humans constantly produce scientific progress but also constantly produce crises.

This damage to the true purpose of education, established itself as a cancer within the educational systems in the Muslim lands. This cancer i.e. secularism penetrated and became a gateway for the infiltration of other destructive purposes within the education system. **There are at least three forms of destructive purposes of education that struck Muslim countries as follows:**

1. The infiltration of foreign educational purposes as part of the agenda of colonialism

Under the guise of counter-extremism or counter-terrorism measures today, the western world clearly has a serious agenda to quell the resurgence of Islamic revival. They move to alter the curricula not simply because of internal problems in Muslim countries, but rather due to their own interest to maintain their hegemony over Muslim lands. There are many ways they use to pressure Muslims countries, including conferences of interfaith dialogue which regularly recommend changes to the curriculum in Muslim lands to make room for closer relations between the religions, or through the form of stipulations linked to receiving grants from international financial bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank, or through UN summits and its international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and so on.

The agenda to further secularise the education systems in the Muslim world has intensified in recent months and years. Indeed, anyone who examines the wave of this curriculum alteration would see it like the analogy of a poet, Al-Akhtal, who describes it "like a hidden rash that spreads" where the disease is hidden but continues to spread fiercely. In the Arab world notably, as the center of the Islamic civilization – the wave of curriculum changes is sweeping across many Muslim countries under the false umbrella of counter-terrorism / radicalism. For instance, the **Saudi Arabia government** completely deleted the topic of Al-Walaa' and Al-Baraa' (Loyalty and Disavowal) from the subject of Tawheed, following the events of September 11. In **Morocco** following the explosions in the country, it reached the extent of calls to delete the word of Jihaad from every single school book. The same applies in respect to the **Emirates, Kuwait and Yemen** where the President exclaimed to his ministers: "*We have to implement change in our educational curricula before a translator comes from America. That is because we are a Muslim people and there is not harm in lessening our religious dosage!*"

The changes of curriculum content are also very significant in other Arab countries, such as **Jordan** for example where alterations have been made to the point that it reached the beard of the man and the Khimaar (veil) and dress of the woman in the pictures of the school reading books. It also deleted a complete lesson about Surah Al-Layl and replaced it with a new lesson about swimming. In **Algeria** the Minister of Education proposed in 2016 to

replace the Arabic Fus'haa (classical) language, the Arabic of the Qur'an, in primary school education with the colloquial Algerian street language. And in **Tunisia**, the Minister of Education stated that to promote happiness of the student, subjects in Mathematics and Physics should be reduced and replaced with Dance and Music in mixed schools

It is no different in other parts of the Muslim world like Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan for instance. In **Turkey** for example, the curriculum for the subject of Religion and Ethics teaches grade 7 students that, "*Secularism, is the guarantee for freedom of thought and faith*", while history lessons present the slander against Islam and Muslim leaders of the past as true facts, thus disconnecting the youth from their Islamic history and culture.

The momentum of the deceptive counter-terrorism / radicalism narrative today has become an important driver for recent intensification of the secularization of education in the Muslim world. For example, in **Bangladesh** in 2010, the Awami regime revised its educational policy under the guise of "modernization" and formed a new education committee to further secularize its education system. The government deliberately appointed a significant number of secular, atheist and Hindu individuals in the key positions of the Education Ministry, National Education Committee and the National Curriculum Coordinator Committee, while individuals from the Qadiyani sect have given the responsibility of writing and editing Islamic text books. In **Pakistan**, in 2006, the government announced a series of reforms to education and a Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF) was set up to reverse the level of Islamization of the education system. In addition, teacher training in the country is often done by foreign organisations or local organisations funded by the West. And in **Afghanistan** since the US war started in October 2001, USAID has spent at least \$868 million for education programs in Afghanistan to steer the thinking of the youth towards the colonial preference. Subjects that contained Islamic issues such as the names of Allah, Jihad etc. have been omitted from schoolbooks.

And here in **Indonesia**, a new version of the secularisation of education is running through the promotion of moderate Islam. From 2016, a new curriculum of Islamic education has been implemented which emphasizes the understanding of so-called peaceful, tolerant and moderate Islam. In truth, it is a form of Islam that rejects Jihad and Islamic political beliefs such as support for the Shariah laws or the Khilafah, while also accepting non-Islamic beliefs from liberalism or other faiths under the guise of 'cultural diversity'. The Minister of Religious Affairs stated that this new curriculum was the government's response to promote peace amid escalating violence and the spread of so-called 'radical doctrines' at academic institutions. The ministry also even moved on a regional level by facilitating in 2016 a synergy forum named *Halaqa* ASEAN Scholars which was comprised of Southeast Asia Ulema and an Islamic boarding school to promote moderate Islam and Islamic moderate values espoused by ASEAN.

Thus the colonial agenda has infiltrated the education system of the Islamic countries from the Arab world to Far East Asia. The plague of secularization has come up with various ways and forms to penetrate the Muslim lands, aided by the subordination of Muslim rulers and their poor educational vision.

2. Capitalization and Commercialization of Education

Muslim countries have been busy privatizing education for the sake of commercial purposes. This really is a destructive purpose for education and is a consequence of the implementation of the liberal capitalist economic system in our lands which is based on usury and which has undermined the true purpose of education in the Muslim world. Indeed,

globalization in capitalism obliges: Firstly, that all countries must adopt the liberal economic system, with the slogan of free trade. Secondly, the privatization of all public sectors. Thirdly, the setting of the state as a guarantor for the continuation of the market economic system. These three conditions have had severe effects on the education world, i.e. privatization and autonomy of education which results in the high cost of education such that education is no longer public property (belongs to the people) but belongs to a certain wealthy class within society.

This has been linear with the globalization stream that has brought a wave of commodification of education, such that education is now seen as the tertiary industry. This stream is initiated by the WTO - World Trade Organization- which set education as one of the tertiary industry sectors through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which regulates the liberalization of trade of 12 services sectors, such as health care, information and communication technology, accounting services, higher education and education for life, as well as other services.

Capitalism has indeed degraded knowledge by considering it as trade goods or a commodity. Relationships and the scope of knowledge is constantly assessed by its economic value. Failure or success of each field of knowledge is always measured by the economic category. If many graduates become unemployed, the question is not on teaching methodology or the teachers, but whether it has a material effect or not.

Capitalism has also devalued the owners of knowledge (scholars and scientists) to the level of its slaves. Their knowledge and professionalism has been hijacked to legitimize the actions of the capitalists in robbing the natural wealth of the Muslim world. For example, in Indonesia, the Law on Investment, the Law on Oil and Gas, the Law on Electricity, and the Law on Water Resources - all of them are the work of intellectuals demanded by the capitalists, and these have been tormenting the people. The intellectuals in the capitalistic system have also been exploited to become a FIREFIGHTER against the problems that are continually produced by the capitalists. They are demanded to reclaim mined lands, to find plants that are resistant to contamination, to find the best bioenergy techniques and various technologies that are all in order to erase the sins of the capitalists of various damages they have caused.

3. Professionalism, Individual Skills, and Intellectual Amusement

These are also among the wrong purposes of education that are closely related to the capitalist values, i.e. individualism. Education is merely viewed as a tool to achieve individual success, to pursue individualistic dreams and short-term benefits, which are only for personal and family benefit and success. This is because, in capitalism, the meaning of success is narrowly understood to be purely for jobs and certain professions in order to achieve financial stability. Capitalist secular values have made acquiring a "profession" to be considered as the ultimate achievement of individual success. The evolution of Global Capitalism has shifted the sacred values in religious teachings and traditions to the margins of society, so that the materialistic values oriented to pleasure and satisfaction become the dominant force in the formation of lifestyles.

On a larger scale, there are businessmen or corporate leaders that misinterpret that the function of education is to score as many professionals and experts. This view needs to be corrected and improved, because education is not just a method of transferring knowledge and technology, then producing the professionals who are ready to become the workforce, or producing genius talents to be used by global corporations in their industry.

This perspective is clearly born from the capitalist elite itself, which has been shown in a 2016 survey conducted by McKinsey & Co. involving 77 companies with approximately 6,000 responders. The survey result confirmed that there is a fierce battle in the world's Capitalist corporate elite in vying for a limited number of genius talents. This degrades the value of education, which is only used as a tool to meet the needs of business competition and mastery of technology for the benefit of a few capital owners, and not for the people, nor even for the State. It does not only degrade education, but this view is also potentially harmful to the benefit of the people and the sovereignty of the State, because it means handing over the loyalty of expertise and knowledge towards material success and corporations, instead of the noble ideal of generating a glorious civilization.

These three forms of destructive purposes of education bring harmful consequences for the Muslim society. Obviously, the education that is far removed from religion, and that exists as a commodity of business, will never be able to build, improve, and elevate the dignity of people's lives, but rather the education system becomes a servant of foreign colonialist agendas, and produces profits for business, as well as individualistic success/professionalism of the individual, etc. In addition, the education system that focuses only on individualistic purposes would only educate individuals in order to have the ability to find a job for personal success, but will be poor in instilling morals and integrity of character (akhlaq). This causes many of the young generation of Muslims to become trapped in social diseases such as drug abuse, promiscuity, brawls, and many other issues. This condition is clearly very far from the progress of a dignified society, and far from the qualification of the developed and sovereign State.

True Purpose of Education

Prof. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, in his book, *Islam and Secularism*, theorized that the purpose of education is to produce a good person. Al-Attas said, "*The aim of education in Islam is therefore to produce a good man... the fundamental element inherent in the Islamic concept of education is the inculcation of adab (manners).*" Who is a good man or the civilized man? In the view of Islam, such a man is he who knows his God, knows himself, makes the Prophet Muhammad (saw) as *uswah hasanah*, follows the path of the heirs to the Prophet (the Ulemah), and a variety of other criteria defined by Islam as constituting a good man. A good man must also understand his potential and work to develop it, because his potential is an amanah from Allah (swt).

Furthermore, in Islam the position of knowledge is very noble. Making education or knowledge as a commodity is equal to degrading the knowledge itself. In the introduction of the book "*Bidayat al-Hidayah*", Imam al-Ghazali (rm) had warned in straightforward language, "*If in your quest for knowledge, your aim is rivalry, boasting, surpassing those who are equal to you in age and merit, attraction of others' attention to you, and amassing the vanities of this world, then you are in reality trying to ruin your own religious nature and destroy yourself, to sell your [happiness of the] Hereafter for [happiness of] this life...*". (*Fa-anta saa'in ilaa hadmi diinika wa ihlaaki nafsika, wa bay'i aakhiratika bi dunyaaka*).

The purpose of seeking knowledge therefore, should be devoted to worshipping Allah (swt) and seeking his guidance (hidayah). Therefore, the aim of education must be to return to the revelation of Allah (swt), rather than be pushed away from it. Anyone who seeks knowledge with the intent to worship Allah (swt) and implement His words, then the Angels will protect the knowledge-seeker by spreading their wings; and the fish in the sea will pray for him. The Prophet (saw) said:

«مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَطْلُبُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَلَكَ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ. وَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أجنحتها لِطالِبِ العِلْمِ رِضًا بِهِ. وَإِنَّهُ يَسْتَغْفِرُ لِطالِبِ العِلْمِ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَمَنْ فِي الأَرْضِ حَتَّى الحُوتِ فِي البَحْرِ. وَفَضْلُ العالِمِ عَلَى العابِدِ كَفَضْلِ القَمَرِ عَلَى سائِرِ النُّجُومِ لَيْلَةَ البَدْرِ. وَإِنَّ العُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الأنبياءِ. إِنَّ الأنبياءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا، وَلَكِنْ وَرَثُوا العِلْمَ. فَمَنْ أَخَذَ مِنْهُ أَخَذَ بِحَظِّ وَافِرٍ»

“One who proceeds on a path in the pursuit of knowledge, God makes him proceed therewith on a path to the Garden (Paradise). And, verily, the angels spread their wings for the seekers of knowledge out of delight. Verily, every creature of the heaven and the earth asks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The merit of the ‘alim (the learned) over the ‘abid (the devout) is like the merit of the moon over the stars on a full-moon night. The learned are the heirs of the prophets, for the prophets did not leave behind a legacy of wealth but that of knowledge. So whoever partakes of it derives a plenteous benefit.”

Education in Islam is a conscious, structured, programmed, and systematic effort in order to achieve specific purposes. The purpose of education outlined by the Islamic Shariah is:

(1) To form a pious man who has an intact Islamic personality (shakhsiyyah Islamiyya), composed of a mentality/thought and disposition/behaviour based on the Islamic Aqeedah alone.

(2) To create Ulemah, intellectuals, and experts in abundance in every field of life who are a source of benefit for the people, and who serve the society and civilization - and will make the Islamic state become a leading, strong, and sovereign state so that Islam as an ideology dominates the world.

With such purposes of education, the output generated from education in Islam is a generation who is pious, submissive, and obedient to the Laws of Allah (swt), and not a generation of poor morality, who are weak, and lacks *ghirah* (spirit) in religion. This true purpose is what will deliver the progress of society, achieve its productive development, and create a noble civilization. With the true education purposes, knowledge will bring blessings, like the blessings of rain watering the fertile soil, from which then benefits continue to flow into many benefits for life, even into the dimensions of the life of society and state, as the Prophet (saw) said:

«إِنَّ مَثَلٌ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللهُ بِهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنَ الهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ كَمَثَلِ عَيْثٍ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا فَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا طَائِفَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ قَبِلَتْ المَاءَ فَأَنْبَتَتِ الكَلأَ وَالعُشْبَ الكَثِيرَ وَكَانَ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبٌ أَمْسَكَتِ المَاءَ فَفَنَعَ اللهُ النَّاسَ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهَا وَسَقَوْا وَرَعَوْا وَأَصَابَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهَا أُخْرَى إِنَّمَا هِيَ قِيَعَانٌ لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً وَلَا تُنْبِتُ كَلأً فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ فَقَهُ فِي دِينِ اللهِ وَنَفَعَهُ بِمَا بَعَثَنِي اللهُ بِهِ فَعِلْمٌ وَعِلْمٌ وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ»

“Verily, the parable of the guidance and knowledge with which Allah the Exalted has sent me is that of rain falling upon the earth. There is a good piece of land which receives the rainfall and as a result there is abundant growth of plants, then there is a land hard and barren which retains the water and people benefit from it and they and their animals drink from it, then there is another land which is barren and neither is water retained nor does any grass grow. The likeness of the first one is he who develops understanding of the religion of Allah and he benefits from that with which Allah sent me. The second is one who acquires knowledge of religion and teaches others. The third is one who does not pay attention to the message and thus he does not accept the guidance with which Allah sent me.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).
Wallahu a'lam bi suwwab

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