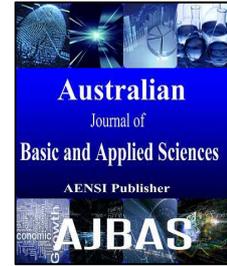




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### The Moral Crisis in Today's World: The 'Sacredness of *Educere*' Towards Moral Enhancement

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**ABSTRACT**

Islam emphasizes the teaching and propagation of good morals. Morals are a central part of Islam due to the fact that the Prophets themselves were sent to propagate the perfect moral pattern. Morality or moral character (*akhlak*) is the base building block of the Islamic civilization. In today's needs to improve, stabilize and enhance the moral character of individuals or *insan*, family and the society at large, the real concept of '*educere*' and its landscape needs vital attention by us. In the life of *insan*, learning takes different forms depending on the surrounding and the situation including the process of informal learning which exceeds formal studies. Enhancing and incorporating values and skills in the process of learning are required in addressing the ever changing and challenging moral crisis within society. This paper will highlights the issues of the moral crisis in Malaysia context and how the sacredness of '*educere*' and its map of knowledge, the true concept of learning, the process of spiritual cleansing towards seeding the moral character and a return to *fitrah* as *insan*. The authors suggesting that all elements will lead to the acceptance of real understanding of knowledge in order to mould, improve and enhance the moral character from the beginnings in today's rampant and challenging moral crisis surrounding world life.

**INTRODUCTION**

The field of study of morality is not a newly explored field as there are numerous previous studies done on the various aspects of morality, with Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. as a model base, in the efforts of finding a solution to the problem of societal moral degradation (Azizah & Nor 'Adha, 2015). This is in line with the word and divine edict of Allah s.w.t in paragraph 4 of the *Surah al-Qalam*, which means "*And truly, you really are noble in character*". This verse depicts the moral characteristics of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. which is perfect and unblemished as it is the perfect manifestation of the moral conduct as required by the *Syariat* or law. This truth is reaffirmed through a hadith that related the question posed to Saidatina Aishah r.a. on the moral character of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. to which she answered "*The morality of Prophet Muhammad is based on the al-Quran*" (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). This clearly proves that morality is a primary factor that should not be taken lightly.

The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w also exhorted people in this way, saying "*Have reverential fear of Allah s.w.t. no matter where you are. Follow all bad deeds with good and that will in turn smudge the bad, associate only with people of high morals*" (Narrated by Tirmidhi). Among the lessons that can be derived from this hadith is

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that those who are faithful and have the reverential fear of Allah s.w.t. are mild mannered and kind when associating with others. The perfection of faith is the hatred towards vices and the keeping away from those who do not adhere to the exhortation (*makruf*) to do good deeds and continue in their disobedient lifestyle.

Morality and the knowledge of it should be pursued by all individuals as the character and actions of a person are guided primarily by the moral values that exist in that person. Individuals with high morals will contribute to the forming of a society free of any social problems. According to Imam al-Ghazali, morality is the characteristics, that are embedded in the deep being and psyche of a person, which guides and defines the base actions of a person, and through this stems the primal actions, which are immediate actions that require no pre-consideration, judgement or weighing, of a person (Zainal Kling, 2008).

Realizing that the problem of moral degradation is becoming worryingly prevalent and widespread, many parties of various backgrounds and walks have examined the foundations of the said problem and have proposed several measures to overcome it. However, to see the extent to which these recommendations are implemented may require a special study on its own. The utmost study is of how ones's can be mould through education. The authors strongly believe that the sacredness of educere from its state of infancy and the back in origin concept is part of the best element towards moral enhancement.

### ***The Importance Of Education:***

It is academically useful to understand and analyze etymological definition of 'education'. In English word, "education" which was derived (normally Greek or Latin) to come out either from *educere* or *educare*. In the first sense to educate is to "lead out or bring out," while in the second it means "to form or train." (Ahmad 1998). Ibnu Khaldun, a classical muslim philosopher and sociologist in fourteenth century, expresses the view that education consists of intellectual, social, and moral training through which hidden potentialities are developed, traits of character are built and culture of the people is conveyed to the coming generations.

Aristotle defined education as process necessary for the creation of a sound mind in a sound body, which the aim and objective of education is to create good and virtuous citizens. Dewey, in twentieth century, defined as: "Education is a process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is development of all those capacities in the individual that will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities." The British scholar, G. Langford expressed that education is an activity which aims at practical results in contrast with activities which aim at theoretical results. (Qadri 2012). It will be generally agreed that education forms the most important link between man's past and future. In fact, it constitutes that process of evaluation and transmission, of coping with the present and planning for the future, which determines a community's survival. It is through education that the cultural heritage, knowledge, and values of a social group are preserved and the continuity of its collective life ensured. In short, education imparts meaning to the existence of a culture and helps it sustain its worldview.

The term 'education' in Islam is understood and comprehended in a totally different manner to what is understood within Western societies. As education in Islam is a very essential tool to mould human thought and life, so its educational system has the potential to lead civilization to the pinnacle. Islam seeks to set up its own civilization on the earth. Therefore, the mission of all prophets was to establish *al-Din* covering all aspects include the values of religion, the faith and belief, the mode and path of life as a muslim. In order to understand what the teachings of Islam are, one has to be able to see via the Prophetic standards and Muhammad SAW is the best of all models. The Prophet SAW established a full-fledged Islamic society in Arabian Peninsula which continued flourishing for several centuries. It was not merely religious society but represented Islamic principles in all walks of life and total angles such as in social, political, economic, moral, cultural, military, international relations and education. Surah 39, ayah 9 reveals: "*Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?*". Surah 2, ayah 269 reveals: "*Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit.*"

The Holy Quran, in fact, stimulates Muslim scholarship to study the Universe in its various facts. "About 750 verses of the holy Quran exhort the believers to study nature, to make best use of 'Aql (reason/ intellect) in their search and to make acquisition of knowledge and scientific comprehension as there are signs of Allah's power for mankind". Holy Quran says "*Verily in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and in the alternation of night and the day, there are indeed signs (revelations and proofs) for men of understanding*" (3:190). Thus the aims and objectives of education or contents of education can be understood from the last Revealed Book, the Quran. We quote a verse of the Quran, "*Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error*" (3:164).

The verse identifies aims and objectives of education and among others are the faith plantation, the knowledge advancement, the wisdom enhancement and the manner development. Ones need to realize the importance of the map of knowledge as the mould elements of organic and emergent values of *insan* as to living by objective in this world as '*khalifatullah*'.

### ***Moral Crisis In Today's World: Malaysia Case:***

Morality and moral character has a very close relationship with life as every action and behaviour a person displays in his or her every day life depends on their moral standards. Morality is also crucial when it comes to protecting the central principles of Syariah, as it is immoral behaviour like adultery, pregnancy outside of marriage and the throwing of babies that had brought about the moral degradation of today that has destroyed the sanctity of dignity, lineage and life.

Various social problems among teenagers and the subsequent cases that follow indicate the prevalence of societal moral degradation in Malaysia. According to an online newspaper report, the official statistics recorded and archived by the National Registration Department from the year 2008 to 2012 revealed that there are about 167,073 illegitimate babies, born with no information whatsoever about the father. This means that an average of 33,415 illegitimate babies is born in a year, 2,784 babies (in a month), 93 infants (in a day) and four infants (in an hour). These statistics are expected to be higher if the cases involving illegal abortions and abandoned babies, which are displayed but not recorded, are taken into account (daily news online, 21.3.2013). The increase in the statistics of illegitimate births proves that Malaysia is experiencing a very serious moral crisis which needs to be addressed and curbed immediately (Azizah & Nor 'Adha, 2015).

Illegitimate births is the most serious moral offence due to the fact that it damages the lineage and is contrary to the teachings of Islam in having descendants or children according to the correct way according to Islamic law. The birth of illegitimate children has also contributed to other criminal acts such as the abandoning or throwing of babies and other actions that can be categorized under cases of abuse, death and so on and so forth, all of which are contrary to the central principles of Syariah (maqasid) which is to preserve life, lineage, dignity, intellect and property. Immoral acts done in secret are contrary to the principle of protecting ones dignity, while the act of adultery and having an extramarital pregnancy is clearly actions that will damage the purity of a lineage in Islam. An Illegitimate child is born out of wedlock and in most cases, these children are either thrown away or aborted. This treatment is clearly a violation of the principle of the protecting a life that is sacred and God-given.

Studies have shown that teenage girls who engage in sexual activity face a high risk of getting pregnant out of wedlock and infecting HIV / AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections and diseases (Sarnon, N., Mohamad, M. S, Kelly, I, Alavi, K., Nen, S., Hoetni, SM, Zaizul, R., Wan Azreena, J.ABS, 2012). This disclosure should be a warning to all, as teenagers who engage in this sort of behaviour tarnishes the holy and pure teachings of Islam that condemns such immoral acts. Islam emphasizes the teaching and propagation of good morals. Morals are a central part of Islam due to the fact that the Prophets themselves were sent to propagate the perfect moral pattern. Thus, Islam, being centred in morality, has with great care formed guidelines, methods and systems of morality that cannot be matched by any other religion in this world (Abdul Hafiz Mat Tuah, Zakaria Stapa and Ahmad Munawar, 2012). Since morality is an important agenda that underlined the mission of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. its central purpose in the formation of an Islamic society should not be underestimated. Efforts in curbing said moral problems should be stepped up so that the central principles of the Syariah can be preserved, and one of them is through education. How this moral degradation can be minimised through education? Some of the points are highlighted here as follows:

#### **a) *Enhancing and Instilling 'Adab' Through 'Educere':***

Education is the inculcation of *adab* or good moral behaviour and character into the spirit of *insan* while *adab* is the mirror of the wisdom of *insan Ta'dibi*. Al-Ghazali in his *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, said that the noble aim of education is its coherence with the objective of the creation of mankind, that is, to master knowledge about Allah SWT. This life is a journey to prepare oneself for life in the Hereafter and not for the sake of power, influence or wealth. Universities should mould students who are wholesome, being imbued with wisdom and morals, and are able to lead and shape their lives. This, however, is rarely achieved now. The awareness towards the importance of morality certainly does exist and has been harnessed by the government to form various activities and monitoring methods such as the curriculum content and co-curriculum at the school level. This is clearly seen in the agenda and implementation of the State education policy. In Malaysia, it is compulsory for Muslim students to attend the Islamic Education class, while non-Muslim students are required to follow the Moral and civic education classes. This approach taken by the government in making the subjects of Islamic and moral education compulsory, demonstrates the importance of morality in the Malaysian societal personality development agenda (Abdul Hafiz Mat Tuah, Zakaria Stapa and Ahmad Munawar (2012).

How many of the local institutions of higher education emphasise on the cultivation of *adab* and the moulding of *insan ta'dibi* and place these as the aim of the institution? The university, as a cultural institution closely linked to skills and values, needs to continuously evaluate the appropriateness of culture and practical implications on its programmes and orientation (Wan Mohd Noor Wan Daud, 2013). The growth of a university transcends time and plays a crucial role in not only aspects of teaching and learning but in other significant roles in developing the society and nation. However, the tremendous advancement in the globalisation, information

technology and communication era and changes in the lifestyles of the society have caused the university to shift its focus to be abreast with the demands of time.

The First World Conference on Islamic education which commenced in Makkah al-Mukarramah (1977) which discussed the concept of true Islamic education decided that education institutions should not be alienated from education philosophy and Islamic universities should not adopt philosophies and policies which are not founded on the teachings of Islam (Syed Ali Ashraf Shaikh Abdul Mabud, 1977).

The true meaning of education with its aim to bear witness to the Oneness of Allah SWT has long been deviated. The advent of the colonial era saw the adaptation of an education system from the West, structured on eurocentrism which is secular and upholds materialism. This produced graduates who entered the industry devoid of the *insan* nature and without a sense of being servants to their creature (*al-khalik*), when they failed to comprehend the meaning of life on this world which is just a mere bridge to the Next. We often learn exclusively for a career-life and not for living a human-life. Of these, then, would there emerge leaders, shapers of the education systems, and policy makers that would contribute to the endless cycle of mass generic product moulded by the West (Ahmad Yani, Nor 'Adha *et al*, 2012).

*Trans-formation (beyond the formation)* in the governance of education involves not only change from the outside but further, it starts with *tasawwur* or correct worldview (Chittick & Murata, 1994). Since change in the education institution involves *insan*, it should start internally, understanding the purpose of education itself. To start with correct understanding, it begins with philosophy. This then will lead to implementation of action through the formation of principles, procedure and process. If the philosophy is flawed, it affects the principles, procedure and process of the administration of an institution of education. *Trans-formation* is not an outer garment, but it should start from within, with the philosophy, to process, which then will be appreciated by members of the whole organisation. Philosophy acts as a compass that will show administrators the correct direction of where an institution should be taken (Intan Fadzlina, Nor 'Adha and Mohd Izham, 2015). *Insan's* 'fitrah' is the back in origin concept. We have to begin a journey to be back in origin. It is a journey to ensure that a student graduated from university will be what a graduate should be, one equipped with knowledge, skills and ability but more, their souls strengthened with *adab* (KUIS 2011).

#### **b) Education to nurturing *Insan*:**

The quality of education has always been intriguing as it reflects the development of *insan* and society. Education is only arrived at the soul (Al-Ghazali 1058-1111). Without "soul" education is blind, disconnected and only create the gadgets operating in machine language or robot in flesh for our future society which could lead to various moral issues in society. Education is a full set of study plan for the emergence of the organic values of *insan*. Technically, it is a systematic learning experience which focuses on achieving the learning objectives and it is beyond an instrument to educate the younger generation in developing their promptness, talent, strength and personality. University must be able to educate and equip *insan* via education with the ability to uphold their responsibility as *khalifatullah* towards *al-khalik*, towards themselves and their religion, their families and the society. The emergence of numbers of higher learning institutions which provide graduates from various disciplines, but with debatable motive to gain is the sign of our worry in education development. The phenomena must be closely linked and tackled through the curriculum structures and developments. The social and moral decadence in society which has affected the human systems such as the economy, politics, law and family institutions has triggered a question whether the curriculum is lacking of certain values since some of the graduates are lack of *adab* and moral values as if they are just 'robots in flesh' (KUIS 2011).

Education is about 'educere' or drawing/bringing out from the student of what is innate, in essence, the education of the human should be about bringing out the potential in them. Taken in the context of life teleology, it seems obvious that education is about nurturing human potential to carry out the covenant with the *al-khalik*. Only an education system that recognizes a transcendental presence would be able to bring out the ability of the human to place the role of *al-khalik* in their equation of life through having the appropriate value system. Al-Attas (1954, 1980) appropriately argued that mainstream education without emphasizing on character formation has practically no value in Islam. This goes beyond just observable mannerism of an individual to comprise too, the dominion of one's internal governance and intellectual discipline. This type of education that allows for the cultivation of *adab* is what Al-Attas (1980) rendered as *ta'dib*. We view the humans or *makhluq* who have undergone this type of education as *insan ta'dibi*.

Today's development of too much commercialization of programs sparks one major question to ask. This fundamental question that needs to be answered by all Institute of Higher Education (IHE) is "What is the purpose of University?" Part of the answer to this question can be traced back in 1977 in the First World Conference on Muslim Education whereby Muslim scholars from around the globe agreed on a definition for the aim of Islamic education as being, 'The aim of education is the creation of the good and righteous man who worships Allah SWT in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the *Shariah* and employs it to sub serve his faith.' The Conference called for moslems worldwide to re-implement

the education based on Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah and to indirectly elevate knowledge based on *Al-Tawhid* (the 'oneness' concept).

Fast forward, global Muslim educationists gathered in Malaysia on 19-20 October 2010 at The Muslim Universities Vice-Chancellors'/Presidents' Forum (MUVCF – OIC, ISESCO) (MOHE 2010), to deliberate on 'Charting New Directions for Muslim Universities: Must We Subscribe to Western Ideological and Philosophical Constructs?' and has passed 11 resolutions (Arfah, 2010). Overall Forum, urged us to return to the true educational system based on Islam through a total separation from Eurocentrism and to focus on the priority in developing the ummah as well as implementing the concept of a university based on Islam. This noble call could be strongly supported by Resolution 1 and Resolution 11 of total 11 resolutions passed by them.

Those 2 important resolutions should be considered as second or third wake up call after the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in 1977. Unfortunately, are we now taking any first or further steps preparing ourselves and university towards the transformation of total Islamic based education landscape by returning the 'soul' to the education, or are we in the standstill position? It is best then if we do not have concrete good answer for ourselves to start analyzing the 'spirit' and big agenda of the Resolution 1 and Resolution 11 of the Forum, as follows:

#### **Resolution 1:**

The Muslim Universities Vice-Chancellors'/Presidents' Forum (MUVCF – OIC, ISESCO), Malaysia, October 2010 declares the urgent need to look for an Islamic approach to higher education, collectively, for developing minds with Islamic and universal values.

#### **Resolution 11:**

The strong need for an Islamic education model does not necessarily give rise to the need to establish a new 'physical' university to implement the model. A virtually university concept could be adopted and/or enhanced to operationalise such a model.

Resolution 1 clearly spelt out the consensus among the global Muslim IHE's captains of the compelling need to relook at the approach to higher education for developing minds with Islamic and universal values. Resolution 11 calls for an Islamic education model that is the map of *educere*.

In establishing an IHE, the emphasizes should be more on developing the appropriate worldview of Islamic university based on the principles of Islam and at the same time appropriate infrastructure is in proper place. Great emphasize on the physical aspect serves little purpose if the essence of education from the Islamic perspective is absent. In an effort to reclaim Islamic tradition as the alternative, if not as mainstream model for HE, the appropriate approach is to disseminate the right philosophy and worldview of education and the role of university in Islam. A worldview that clarify the purpose of human existence in this temporary world as *khalifatullah*, places human in its right and proper place as *insan ta'dibi*. The model of HE must be one that allows for the recognition and acknowledgement for things to be put in the right and proper place in the order of creation, in agreement with what Al-Attas (1980) describes as *adab*.

Malik Bennabi once said that colonisation has internally damaged the native society in terms of problems regarding the spirit, mind and culture which have opened paths to a new kind of dominance, that of the mind. The most critical problem facing the Muslim world now is the problem of knowledge which results in social, economic and political upheavals. This is admitted by scholars such as (Al-Attas, 2011, Fauziah Md Taib & Hafiz Zakariya, 2012, Syed Ali Ashraf Shaikh Abdul Mabud, 1977)

His Majesty Duli Yang Maha Mulia, Pemangku Raja Perak Darul Ridzuan, Raja Nazrin Shah in Kongres Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Seluruh Malaysia held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, said that Islamic institution such as the State Islamic Religious Council should play a role in shaping the development of Muslims through various fields. It requires a paradigm shift, work ethos and change in administration. The purpose and direction of future education should be emphasised by administrators of universities in their attempt to achieve transcendence in education. This is to ensure that knowledge given is in line with *fitrah* and leads to the truth.

Based on the explicit explanation above, it is understood that a Muslim community is decorated with the personal characteristics of high morals and great decency. Thus, any action that is contrary to the nature of such excellent morals and decency will contaminate the clear and pure distinguishing features of a Muslim community that makes it stand out from other communities. That being said, the presence of a variety of social problems in our society today indicates that efforts must be made to preserve the excellence of moral character and decency that was the major attribute of the Muslim community in Malaysia. In addition to educating the children, parents also need to be given a clear understanding of their tasks in their role as a leader of the family. They play a major part in the moral development of children. As such, the efforts to propagate understanding towards moral offences and the importance of forming good characteristics among children should be continued and amplified by various concerned agencies like the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development through various forms missionary or community programs such as forums, seminars, workshops and so on.

**Conclusion:**

Education of morality and moral values is a crucial ingredient in the forming of a happy family, peaceful society and united State. Harmony in a family can be achieved when good manners and values are incorporated in each aspect of family life. Whereas, happiness and peace in the family unit is within grasp with the practice of good moral behaviour just as seen in the example set by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. in his household and that of his companions. This family harmony, peace and happiness will help form a peaceful and united society which will in turn catalyse the establishment of a prosperous and secure State (Faridah Che Husain, Fakhru Adabi Abdul Kadir, 2011). It is crystal clear that good morals and manners are not just important in the life of an individual in an absolute sense, but has a direct relevance towards the development of a nation.

The sacredness of education and *insan* is the absorption of *adab* in one's self. The actualization of *adab* in *insan* composing society as a collective entity reflects the condition of justice, and justice itself is a reflection of wisdom, which is the light that is lit from the lamp of prophecy that enables the recipient to discover the right and proper place for a thing or a being to be. The best formula to instill in education is the recipe of nurturing '*adab*' to achieve the wholesome '*insan ta'dibi*' as '*khalifatullah*' through the vertical elements of having the faith in Allah SWT. We should come back to the nature of *fitrah* of practising 'Know, Do, Be' and be ready to 'Unlearn, Learn and Relearn' in life to regain the glory of the way of life based on Islam. Through these phases of learning, the faith among us will be planted steadily and the cycle of knowledge and wisdom advancement will take place, while developing after all the good manners or *adab* of *insan*. Having all these in place, and as citizens and one big society, we should be able to minimize those challenging moral crisis and the degradation of good moral values within us.

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