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Educational Strategies to Develop Discipline Among Students from the Islamic Perspectives

Masthurhah Ismail, Puteri Rohani Megat Abdul Rahim, Muhammad Sufi Mohamad Yusoff

Abstract

Issues pertaining to discipline among students both in schools and higher institutions of learning are constantly being highlighted in the mainstream media, such as bullying, gangsterism, smoking, beating up teacher, stealing, raping and so forth. Several studies have been conducted to determine factors which lead students to behave in such a manner. Although, these studies have developed strategies to tackle the issues, the problems still persist. This may be because the approach used does not take into consideration a balanced approach which includes the elements of emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects. This paper intends to consider an approach employed from the perspective of Islamic Educational Strategy in tackling the students. This qualitative research focuses on reviewing analysis of educational philosophy from the perspectives of Islamic scholars using documentation method and the data gathered would be analysed as findings. The objective of the paper is to determine the type of educational strategies in Islam that can help mould students to become disciplined students. The strategies would be put forward to curriculum planners so that a more balance educational system can be formed. Subsequently, the strategies can be employed by parents, school teachers, and lecturers to educate and develop students to be disciplined.

Keywords: Student Indiscipline; Islamic Educational Strategy; Educational Strategies; Balanced Approach

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1. Introduction

Indiscipline prevails among students in various forms such as gangsterism, bullying, promiscuity, stealing, drug addiction, delinquency, and so forth. The number of students behaving negatively is increasing daily and the issues have often been reported in the local dailies. For instance, in 2006 only, there were 6,652 records of disciplinary problems amongst students in the schools (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2008). A similar report was given by the Department of Welfare under the Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development on criminal cases involving students that there was an increase by 18.9% from 6,059 cases in 2004 to 7,201 cases in 2005 (Malaysia Department of Social Welfare, 2006). The disruptive behavior portrayed by a considerable number of Malaysian students has caused a grave concern among educators, parents, and society at large in determining the root of the problem.

2. Research Background

Researchers claimed that the transition growing process from childhood to adolescent that is accompanied by dramatic and psychological transformations may alter the student’s cognitive, emotive, and social development (Papathanasiou & Lahana, 2007). Hence, an adolescent who is not capable to cope with the pressure and expectations of the growing development, he may behave in such disruptive behavior as a show of defense in handling such dramatic changes. In a report from the Malaysia Department of Statistics (2007) showed that adolescents constitute about 10% of the total population in Malaysia and that there are 2.6 million adolescents of ages between 15 to 20 years old. Hence, there is a need to alleviate and contain the indiscipline problems among students. The local media too reported there is an increase in the number of social problems among students of institution of higher learning, such as in the case of promiscuity among university students. The problem portrayed does not only involve the students at the private universities, but also students from the public universities. The scenario reflected badly on the image of university students who should portray an exemplary behavior to the younger generation particularly to school students at the primary and secondary levels. Although the number of cases may seem smaller when compared to the total population of students, however if the problem is not curtailed it may lead to a negative understanding that such indecent behavior is permitted at higher institutions of learning. Another issue of concern is drug abuse among students; Malaysian Anti-Drug Association (2005) reported that there were 1,357 cases of drug abuse amongst students in that year. The issues reported that there is an urgency to meet the challenges in tackling indiscipline problem among students.

Although there are a considerable number of studies on the issue of indiscipline among students, however, most of these studies were carried out in the West and from the perspective of western educational philosophers. There is a lack of study on students’ indiscipline in Malaysia context (See, 2009) and from the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy (Abd. Munir, 2009). Moreover, most of the studies concerning indiscipline amongst students were done to identify the positive and negative behaviors in students (See, 2009), and to determine the level of students discipline problems and the dominant factors contributing to the students discipline problems. The findings of the study have contributed to a better understanding the factors that may attribute to students behaving in such negative manner. Nonetheless, how the problems can be approached from the Islamic philosophy of education is not being considered. Therefore, there is a need to contain the problems because the youths are the future generation and future leaders in maneuvering the state of this country. Hence, the intention of this study is to view the indiscipline problem amongst students from the Islamic perspective as well as to provide an alternative approach to tackle the problem.
3. Research Methodology
This paper focuses on gaining information from scholars of educational philosophy both westerners and Islamic educational philosophers through documentations via library research.

3.1. Research Design
The research design is based on the objectives of the study that is to determine the type of educational strategies in Islam that can help mold students to become disciplined students. Discussions on educational concept from the Islamic perspective were put forward in this study. However, prior to the discussion on Islamic education explanation on the Malaysia educational philosophy is dealt first before looking at the views of Islamic scholars like Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Al-Ghazali, and al-Muhasibi. An analysis by comparison with western intellectuals was made in order to the similarities and differences between them. The data obtained were analyzed, compared, and contrasted to the non-Islamic educational philosophers such as Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky. From here we can make a conclusion to produce a number of strategies to improve students’ discipline. The study began by collecting data and it was followed by data analysis.

3.1 Data Collections and Data Analysis
The data was obtained from the secondary data such as books from Islamic and non Islamic scholars. The data obtained were compared and contrasted to identify the elements of similarities and differences from both the Islamic educational philosophy and the non-Islamic perspectives.

4. Findings

4.1. Educational Philosophy in Islam and Malaysia Educational Philosophy
Education in Islam is an on-going effort to deliver knowledge, skills and molding a noble character (syakhsiah) in fulfilling responsibilities as a human and a vicegerent on earth based on the Qur’an and Sunnah to achieve happiness in the world and the well-being in the afterlife. Education from the perspective of Islam is a process of education to nourish all the potential of the whole man that is in spirit, mind, and body to worship Allah, and qualify him to be the servant and the leader (Khalifah) on this earth, as well as able to use what has been created to bring benefit to the mankind (Abdul Basit, 2009).

According to Said Hawa (1935-1989) the basis of education in Islam is faith. The education is the foundation in producing faith of sincere believers amongst men (Said Hawa, 1992). Thus, a teacher must educate students to purify their souls first by strengthening their faith. This is because when they fail it is due to several factors, namely ignorant educators; students having no confidence, and a falsified syllabus (Said Hawa, Tarbiyah Ruhiyyah, 1992).

Based on the first revelation received by the Prophet (pbuh) and from the hadith of the Prophet which revealed that the Prophet’s mission is to educate and develop human beings as men with noble and good character (akhlak). Therefore, education from the perspective of Islam is necessary because it is a tool to develop the human capacity physically and spiritually. Human development can only be developed with a continuous effort in education, and using the correct and suitable teaching fundamentals.

The current education philosophy in Malaysia is based on the Cabinet Report of 1979 which concentrates on human development. An excerpt of the report: “Economic development is very rapid in today’s world. The same goes for social developments. “We are faced with different types of elements...” Therefore, we face another challenge that is human development.” (Cabinet Report, 1979:226). The educational philosophy was developed based on some policy documents and ideologies.
Since the human development covers the inclusion of the growth of the nation as well as the unique elements of Malaysia being a multi-racial country, thus the combination and integration of the National Principles (Rukun Negara), New Economic Policy and the National Education Policy are in inevitable to the national philosophy. This has led to the creation of the National Philosophy of Education in 1996.

“Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectuality, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on firm belief in God...” (National Educational Philosophy, 1996. p. iv).

The elements in the National Philosophy stress that education is an on-going effort which indirectly implied that fellow Malaysians need to have faith and belief in God as well as promoting on the aspect of good character and holds high moral values. The National Philosophy of Education emphasizes the aspect of religion as an entity which every Malaysians should strive to uphold. In addition, the philosophy of education in Malaysia is influenced by the infrastructure of the nation that is the period before Malaysia achieved its independence, after independence, in the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and now in the 21st Century.

Moreover, the dynamic status philosophy of education is also influenced by the multiple racial polarization of Malaysian. In order to ascertain that all Malaysians live in a harmonious state the government ensures that education plays it roles to bring all Malaysians under one roof so that a more common ground is established among Malaysians. With this realization, there is an urgency need to approach education from the perspectives of Islam because the fundamentals of teaching lie in the firm belief that faith in God is of utmost important.

5. Educational Philosophy from the Islamic and Non-Islamic Perspectives

From the findings obtained it can be deduced that there are similarities as well as differences in the educational philosophy from both the Islamic and non-Islamic scholars. As displayed in Table 1 below the similarities aspects deal with the fundamental aspects on what goes on in the class such as the teaching and learning process, the student-teacher relationship, class management, critical thinking, two-way interaction, and so forth, while the differences aspects concern with abstract intention of seeking knowledge.

For instance, according to Islamic scholars like al-Muhasibi (781-857), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Ibn Qayyim (1292-1350), Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), and Said Hawa (1935-1989) the ultimatum process of obtaining knowledge is to appreciate and be closer to Allah and understand the existing purpose to be on this earth as well as equipping men with the necessary knowledge in order to accommodate their lives on this earth.
Table 1: Similarities and Differences of the Educational Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophers of Education</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
<th>Islamic perspectives</th>
<th>Non-Islamic perspectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islamic Scholars</strong></td>
<td>- Education is important</td>
<td>- Viewing the process of education as an act to be closer to the Creator</td>
<td>- Spiritual aspect that is firm belief in the existence of Allah</td>
<td>- Education is viewed as more of instrumentalism in other word is a way of looking at ideas as instruments for action.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Knowledge construction as a social process</td>
<td>- Education consists of the process of acquiring knowledge and human development that is having a good character (akhlak) according to Islamic teachings.</td>
<td>- Stresses on the aspect of intellectualism; the mind or cognitive factor plays an important role then spiritual factor in the development of higher mental functions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Teacher-student relationship</td>
<td>- Students’ etiquette during the process of learning</td>
<td>- Importance of good behaviour (akhlak) portrayed by both teacher and student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Teacher as mediator/facilitator</td>
<td>- Taking good meal from halal sources</td>
<td>- Taking good meal from halal sources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A two-way communication for both teacher and student</td>
<td>- Established <em>Biah Solehah</em> (Good behavior environment-obey syari’a)</td>
<td>- Established <em>Biah Solehah</em> (Good behavior environment-obey syari’a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Student-centred</td>
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<td>- Scaffold the learning process</td>
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<td>- Encourage students to be active learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Conducive learning environment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Islamic Scholars</strong></td>
<td>- Subsequently, the process enables good and noble values be instilled amongst humans so that every one of us is able to appreciate what Allah has made, and show respect, and be tolerant to other people. In other words, from the Islamic perspective education covers both the spiritual, social, and mental aspects. However, in contrast to the westerners’ educational philosophers such as from John Dewey (1859-1952), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) the emphasis is more on the material development aspects such as physical, social, and mental. For instance, both Piaget and Vygotsky emphasize the role of cognitive development amongst students (Piaget, 1980; Vygotsky, 1986), while Dewey (1920) proposed that the cognitive and technical skill be included in the education system such as providing students learning vocational skill like learning how to fix an engine, to cook, and so forth.</td>
<td>- This differs from the perspective of Islamic scholars who noted that the basic of education is more on spiritual rather than material development; although they do not deny the importance of material development in order to progress as civilized nation. However, the material development should be in parallel or sub-set to spiritual development. Therefore, the findings illustrated that educational philosophy is the heart of education. Hence, with the correct and appropriate educational philosophy a more balanced and holistic approach can be used to develop a better discipline among students. Nonetheless, one important aspect which has often been neglected in education is the aspect of spiritualism. The understanding and firm belief in one’s religion provide the guidance on how human being should behave with one another. Only those with a strong conviction on the existence of Allah are able to understand the mere purpose of being on this earth. Subsequently, this would encourage individual to have good and noble character (akhlak).</td>
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6. Educational Strategies to Develop Discipline Among Students from The Islamic Perspective

In this study, four Islamic scholars were reviewed: Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, Syeikh al-Imam al-'Alim al-Zahid al-Wara' al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. According to Ibn Khaldun, men are often influenced by the environment he inhabited. Thus, in order to ensure that humans have positive make-up in their lives, the environment should be guided by the values, and the characteristics of the good. By considering Islamic ethics (akhlak) society will permanently living in honorable. This is clearly explained by Ibnu Khaldun (t.t):

‘When we looked to the strong-willed, we will find that they will compete in doing good and they have positive values such as generous, forgiving, and bear the burden of the weak, trying to achieve something that was not successful, being patient with things that one dislikes, discharge trust, pleased with scholars who uphold the tenets, humility of the poor, to stay away from doing tricks and deceit etc. We know that all the values are the character that is owned by the leaders and therefore they deserve to be a leader to lead other people.’

Based on the above statement of Ibn Khaldun, Islamic ethics development is strongly influenced by the environment and it is dependent on the governance of a country. The factors refers to the family, residential areas, schools and the mass media which have a strong impact both on the form of a character and discipline. In addition, he noted that teachings which have violent elements can also contribute to moral decadence of an individual. In other words, Ibn Khaldun clearly disagrees with teachers who would use strong action or corporal punishment against students.

Ibn Khaldun’s view that education as well as teaching is an activity that includes the process of obtaining knowledge and good behavior (akhlak) that is in accordance to Islamic teachings. The process of education is not only to acquire knowledge (cognitive) but include activities of good ethics (affective and psychomotor). He stresses that education is a process of self-development, and it is done in stages according to the suitability and ability levels of the students. He then explicitly explained that in order to achieve the educational goals two things need to be addressed in the education system, first is by having an appropriate curriculum, and second, the methods and measures that should be used by teachers such as the visual method (Talqin), teaching gradually (Tadrij), focused lesson, modeling (Uhakah/Taqlid), practice (Al-Tajribah), repetition (Al-Tikrar), adventure (Al-Rihlah), and action towards students who make mistakes so that the mistakes can be corrected in order to develop better virtues (Al-‘Uqubah wa Takdih).

Second is from the Al-Ghazali’s perspective. Al-Ghazali (2000) argues that educational approach in developing moral values can be divided into two. The first is striving (mujahadah) and getting used to do and practice good deeds. Second, the act is done repeatedly and blessings from Allah swt are always sought after. According to Al-Ghazali moral education consists both formal and informal education (Al-Ghazali: t.t). The informal education begins at home in the family. He proposed the informal education is done through story telling and portraying good conduct (uswah al-hasanah) method. Through this approach children are trained and conditioned to do good and parents should monitor the children’s social conduct. Al-Ghazali (2003) argued for the formal education that it is compulsory for parents to enroll their children to school. He further explained that the process of educating children should include the elements of reinforcement, and punishment as well as giving priority to a child the right to rest and play. Thus, Al-Ghazali is of the opinion an honest, responsible teacher or mursyid able to apply what he preaches, and he or she is required to ensure that Islamic ethics can be implemented successfully (Al-Ghazali: 2003). Students also need to play their part such as to ensure that the purity of the heart is
constantly guarded, not being arrogant, and disobedient of their teachers. In addition, the students must always associate the process of seeking knowledge in wanting to be closer to Allah (taqarrub).

Third is proponent from Syeikh al-Imam al-'Alim al-Zahid al-Wara' al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi. He has his own method in approaching human development in the education perspective; among them are preserving the soul from negative qualities, instill good and noble values, having food from halal sources. He further added that this process of human development can be achieved through a systematic approach via constant reflecting of one’s action accompanied by training (riyadah) and strive or mujahadah – strive to fight against negative desires (Abd. Rahman & Norfadilah: 2012).

Finally, is Ibn Qayyim. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah has constantly emphasized the advantages of students in seeking knowledge, and the appropriate behaviour shown by students when pursuing knowledge like paying respect to the teachers as well as having a good relationship with them. This act is associated as a way of cleansing the soul from any negative characteristic before the process of seeking knowledge begins (Abd. Rahman & Norfadilah: 2012).

In conclusion, from the perspectives of Islamic scholars, we can deduce several strategies as a mechanism to instil discipline. Discipline begins from parents upbringing that is it starts at home and is helped by the teachers in schools. Nonetheless, there are several strategies that educators need to reconsider:

First stage:
1. Getting to know students personally
2. Establishing a closer relationship with students
3. Instilling a firm belief towards Allah and understand the reason why Allah creates them
4. Appreciating their own existence as potential human beings
5. Teacher plays the role as mursyid (knowledgeable individual) and be a role model (qudwah) to students
6. Teaching students the appropriate manners in learning
7. Encouraging students to continuously and repeatedly practice good manners that are in accordance to Islamic teachings

Second stage:
1. Creating usrah activity (develop a small family unit or small group) with groups of students in a continuous effort
2. Teaching the students to be disciplined though outdoor activities such as camping (rehlah saidah)

Third stage:
1. Creating an atmosphere where the values and norms of Islam is upheld at schools such as the culture of seeking knowledge, the culture of respect and discard the cultures and practices that are contrary to Islamic teachings.
2. Continuously monitoring students’ development

7. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be deduced from this research. First, strategy is very important to be considered by the intellectuals and educators in order to resolve any problems that arise such as indiscipline problem among students. Second, a strategy is not just designed on paper but it must also be executed in formulation of the national education system or implemented by parents and educators in educational institutions. Third, the strategy employed should also be balanced between spiritual, social, and physical aspects in dealing with the growth and development of students as well as formulation of good behavior. In reality Islam has long been outlining the education system with its primary goal is the
formation of an individual with noble and good character in accordance to Islamic teachings. This study sets the impetus for the researchers to carry out further investigation on the strategies. A research in investigating the effectiveness of the educational strategies will be carried out on a group of students with indiscipline problems.

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