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Ethics of Islamic Teachers Education and the Challenges of the Current Era

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Abstract

Islamic teachers education play a prominent role in achieving the goals in education which is to produce knowledgeable, pious and of good values individuals. In this matter, teachers' ethics are crucial factors which can ensure the effectiveness and success of the Islamic Education system. An ethical teacher with good values will be able to develop himself as an educator and later on, be a good role model to the students. This concept paper is targeted to discuss teaching and ethics from the perspective of Islam and other ethical values, which should be implemented by the Islamic Education teachers. The discussion made by the Muslim scholars such as Imam Abu Hanifah (80H) and Imam al-Ghazali (450H). The views made by these scholars should be refined and internalized to empower the teaching ethics among Islamic Education teachers, in the aspects of religion, personality and professionalism specifically to face the challenges of the current education issues.

Keywords: Ethics, Teacher, Islamic Education, Professionalism, Challenges

Introduction

The nurturing of a pious and morality good individuals is an important goal in education as well as in Islam as engraved in the Philosophy of Islamic Education. This statement is parallel with the National Education Philosophy, which is to produce individuals who are well - balanced and harmony in intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical, based on the belief and obedience towards God (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2005). Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 which is now entering its second wave of execution, is also a framework of education transformation to fulfill the needs of international manpower without eliminating ethics and spiritual needs. The efforts carried

out by the government to uplift the education system should be executed for the sake of producing learned Malaysians at the same time practicing good values in life.

In the context of education service in this country, teaching ethical code is at the very utmost basis as the guidelines for teachers to implement their tasks effectively and systematically (Alis Puteh, 2016). Teachers with good ethics are those with high discipline, and relatively showing high commitment in making the country's education mission a success. For the Islamic Education teacher, their principles and faith of ethics should not be limited to only teaching ethical code which is set by the Ministry of Education. Hence, it should be more universal and comprehensive based on Islamic ethics which sourced through the divine revelation. This is due to the fact that Islamic ethics are based on *Tauhid* values, justice and leadership which are carried out based on trustworthiness of the believers in seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT (Kamri, 2015). The importance to practice Islamic ethics in a teacher's career has very much to do with the role of the Islamic Education teachers in guiding and educating students when it comes to Islamic values and practices, which is closely referred to Allah's words in Surah an-Nahl verse 125:

"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner, surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way."

Teachers play an important role as a medium for conveying knowledge and skills, the individuals who inculcate moral values and manners, whilst ensuring that the knowledge is practiced in the students' lives (Hamzah et al, 2013). Al- Muhammady (1991) stated that teachers are the agents towards the effectiveness of education. The success and preservation of education are dependent on the awareness of these teachers towards their responsibilities to educate the human nation, in the best way they could. This education system requires the willingness of teachers in terms of sincerity and the mastery of knowledge, skills as necessitated by the current situations (Jasmi and Nawawi, 2012). In this sense, teachers with good ethics and commendable individuality will be able to give outstanding impact towards work quality, academic achievement and students' attitude, thus, will bring great influence to the success of an organization (Mohamed Saleh et al, 2016). Therefore, the ethics of Islamic Education teachers are seen as the crucial factors in the development of human resource moulded by Al-Quran and as-Sunnah in accordance with the Islamic Education Philosophy.

Consequently, it is comprehensible that the role of an Islamic Education teacher is a profound duty (Wan Teh, 1986) which is to nurture a pious individual who sets to fulfill three main criteria whereby to devote only to Allah, clear from elements of *syirik*, yield oneself to good deeds in a wide range of understanding, pertaining all daily activities which lead to the serenity in this life and hereafter, and represent himself with moral values. This matter is stressed by S.S Husain and S. A Ashraf (1989) that in order to nurture the development of a Muslim, a teacher should focus in inculcating his entire personality spiritually, mentally, intellectually and maintain his rationale, emotions and senses.

Nevertheless, this divine intention cannot be achieved if the teacher, who acts as the main role player does not execute his responsibilities effectively. In this aspect, ethics and attitude shown by the teachers should be in line with Islamic guidelines covering physical appearance, individuality, characteristics and actions. All these elements are the contributing factors to draw the students'

attention so that they are approachable, loved and trusted. Imam al-Ghazali, symbolizes a teacher who practices Islamic rules and guidelines as the sun that shines brightly (Shahran, 2017). The relationship that is built between a teacher and the students will help ease the process of learning as it happens on the basis that they need each other (Yussof, 2010).

Issues and ethical problems among Teachers

Teachers are the root in ensuring our country's education vision achievable and align with the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2035. The plan is to produce Malaysians who are nurtured with absolute values and spiritual ethics. Imam al-Ghazali (1988) said that a teacher should possess virtuous personal ethics to ensure the intentions and goals of education are achieved. However, Mohamed Saleh et al (2016) when stated on the Executive Report by the Board of Education Inspectors and Quality Assurance in 2013 mentioned that 30% of teachers scored below the category of satisfactory concerning attitude. This matter, obviously contradicts the model of Malaysian teachers which are designed to be produced through The Professional Teachers Development Core Plan (PIPPK, 2016). This plan targets to produce teachers who practise moral values and ethics. This situation, if continues will affect the smooth execution and effectiveness of education process that lead to the interruptions of balanced and holistic individual developments.

It is undeniable that some Islamic Education teachers are also involved in certain unethical issues concerning teaching profession nowadays. They are supposed to be religious icons but tend to sway away from Islamic values. Mass media in this country has repeatedly reported on issues regarding crimes and sexual harassment, such as adultery, sodomy and sexual assault (Berita Harian, July 20 2011). The involvement of these religious teachers in such cases has obviously shown that it is a violation of religious ethics and leave us with clues or hints that some religious education teachers do not abide by the Islamic guidelines in their lives, despite the knowledge and understanding of the religion itself compared to other people (Mohamad, 2015). Such issues have been given a wide highlight to the society causing negative reactions against the Islamic Education teachers. This condition has somewhat affected the image and reputation of the Islamic Education teachers as well as respected and acknowledged religious groups (Ishak et al, 2017). These religious people are the ones being trusted to educate and guide the society towards a more blessed and harmonious life. Their reputation is put on stake (Suhid et al, 2015).

Besides, Islamic Education teachers are also involved in issues related to teaching professionalism ethics whereby accountability and integrity are questioned. For illustration, they are absent from school without solid reasons, unpunctual, delinquent and unable to submit to the instructions by the administration (Mamat et al, 2016; Musa, 2010). Previous researches also have shown personal religious practices of these teachers are being affected by their negative characteristics such as being too strict, scolding and getting angry unnecessarily towards the students and intentionally demoralizing the students (Tamuri and Ajuhary, 2010). The Islamic Education teachers are also labelled by the students as being hot-tempered and very blunt in conversations (Hassan et al, 2009).

In such situation, the goals and objectives in Islamic Education are rather difficult to achieve due to the factor that Islamic Education teachers who are the prominent factor as the education virtues agents fail to be functioning well. The inability of these Islamic Education teachers to practise

their daily lives according to Islamic ethics has resulted in the students adapting negative values from the teachers themselves (Ahmad, 2016). It is worrying that teachers have been identified as the contributing factors towards moral degradation and disciplinary problems among students (Katip, 2013). Hence, when the Muslim teenagers are involved in worrying conflicts and moral degradation, the role and the effectiveness of the Islamic Education teachers are therefore in dispute.

This phenomena signals that the nurturing of Islamic Education through teaching and learning is not achieved to the entire extent yet (Shahran, 2017). This condition is also related to some Islamic Education teachers who are said to fail in their role as *qudwah hasanah* to the students (Katip et al, 2015). In Islam, the influence of teachers' ethics and attitude towards the constructions of students' individuality and divine values is undisputable (Tamuri and Jasmi, 2007; Najma and Mansor, 2013).

Consequently, the ethics of Islamic Education teachers should be accentuated in accordance to the hope of the society to educate and guide the younger generation towards the implementation of practices and religious deference (S.S and Tengku Kassim, 2017). In other words, teachers are the mould of characters and courtesy should delicately guard their self-ethics so that they are highly respected by their students without doubts (Harun et al, 2015). Hence, this concept paper will reveal more about teachers' ethics from the perspectives of Islam as to give a clearer view related to expected ethics to be applied by Islamic Education teachers to self-mould themselves to become the reliable human resource.

Teaching ethics in the perspective of Islam

From the Islamic view, ethics are more accurate with the term *akhlaq* (Noh et al, 2015). Islamic ethics consist of a set of principles and particular values to assist individuals to make justifications of their deeds whether it complies to the requirements in the religion itself or otherwise. It is a set of criteria which is in line with the Quran and hadith to determine the right and wrong of an action (Omar, A.Z et al, 2016). Ethics in Islam are the reflection of good values concerning thinking, actions, personality and individual deeds.

In the context of Islamic education, a Muslim teacher's ethics must represent himself as a good servant of Allah. In other words, ethics shown must put forward a very high level of *akhlaq* and Islamic *Syariat* from the aspects of speaking, communication, physical appearance, actions and deeds. It is an essential requirement for improving the professionalism of teachers. Teachers' ethics are a vital factor because these ethics are profound to the students. In fact, teachers' ethics will determine the effectiveness of learning process especially to the students at the school level or teenagers (Aliani, 2018). A teacher's ethics will become the factor that attract or deprive students from him to willingly learn knowledge. Moreover, good ethics shown by teachers can be indirectly instilled in their lives. This is the hidden curriculum that needs to be highlighted by the teachers based on *tarbiah* and *tad'ib* concept in Islam (Abdul Kareem, 2014). The process of teaching is not limited only to the do's and don'ts. Nonetheless, they learn through examples set by the teachers in front of them (Saaran, 2010). The truth is, this hidden curriculum is the supporting factor towards the accomplishment of Islamic education goals and aspirations to develop a pious and morality right individuals.

Therefore, teachers should uphold their greatness and virtues by potraying good characteristic, and do not behave in such a way that can cause negative perception by the society

and the students towards themselves (al-Muhammad, 1985; Yussof, 2010). Islamic Education teachers should have divine and excellent personality which is also termed by Al Qardhawi (2007) as '*Ibadurrahman*' which is the characteristic of devoted servants of Allah, eventually whose lives are blessed by Him. These criteria revolve around humbleness, generosity, forgiving, modesty, pious and on top of that always avoiding sins. As a matter of fact, they also seek and hope for Allah's blessing, fearful of Allah's punishment. The characteristic as '*Ibadurrahman*' is based on the characteristic of the Most Holy which is *Ar-Rahman*, and of those who deserve to get the blessing and ultimate love from Allah. Those are the ones who devote themselves to Allah in implementing all the requirements asked by God. As well as, the ones that set good examples to others. This matter is clearly stated in the Al-Quran through His words in Surah Al-Furqan (25:63)

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ
الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿٦٣﴾

"And the servants of the Beneficent Allah are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace"

Teachers who have '*Ibadurrahman*' will reflect the characteristics and criteria of Rabbani teachers and will enable them to enlighten their students to walk through challenges in this life seeking Allah's pleasure. Therefore, teachers who truly understand their task as educators will always be concerned with their personality in aspects of physical appearance, self-discipline, behaviour and communication parallel with Islamic *Syariat* (Jasmi, 2010). A teacher will be able to display the beauty of morality and good deeds, at the same developing religious deference in themselves.

Teaching ethics in Islam have been discussed by many famous Muslim scholars such as Imam Abu Hanifah (80H) , Imam al-Ghazali (450H), Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1928), Imam Al-Makki (w385H) etc. They have enlisted the characteristics and prime values that have to be owned by a teacher according to acknowledged position a teacher holds in Islam.

Imam Abu Hanifah Teachers' Ethics Model (80H)

Imam Abu Hanifah in his great work '*Waṣiyyah Abī Ḥanīfah li Abī Yūsuf.*' had set some ethics and morality that should be nurtured in teachers suitable with the level of knowledge they have. Those courtesies are, to put efforts in increasing the Islamic practices. For instance, prayers and fasting, at the same time trying to perform the practice of *sunnah* like charity and not being stingy. Teachers must always self-evaluate themselves in the aspects of responsibilities as teachers and educators. Besides, teachers must always guard their dignity by practising good characteristics according to Islam in all aspects including attitude, interaction with others, appearance and individuality. Teachers must always show calmness, patience and perseverance in facing any situations. They should keep themselves presentable and decent in dressing (Mamat and Wan Abdullah, 2014).

Based on Imam Abu Hanifah, a teacher should progressively increase knowledge .The passion for knowledge will help to increase skills and mastery in various fields, subsequently will consistently seeking for knowledge (Mamat and Wan Abdullah, 2014). Other than that, a teacher should be sincere in educating his students as his own children. A teacher should potray determination and

wisdom in choosing the right time to convey knowledge, or advices to the students. One of those rarely stated by the Muslim scholars but is highly stressed by Imam Abu Hanifah is the courtesy students should practice towards their teachers who once taught them. Among those courtesies are to pray for forgiveness and well-being of the teachers, as well as visiting them. Imam Abu Hanifah always stresses on the courtesy towards teachers in order to be blessed erudite people.

Imam al-Ghazali 's Teachers' Ethics Model (450 H).

Al -Ghazali in his book *Ihya Ulum al Din* (1988) summarized eight ethics that a teacher should possess and practiced. Sincerity is the most prime ethic to be practised. It refers to teaching and educating solely because of Allah without expecting any reward, gratuity, perquisite, words of thanks and gratitude from human beings (Mohamed et al 2016). The next ethics are love and empathy towards the students, patience and not easily angered, in which accepting any conflicts regarding students and performing duties with open hearts (Aliani, 2018), giving advice and guidance to students properly using good words and comprehensible to them (Mohamed et al, 2016), levelled teaching teaching by taking into considerations the students' cognitive and thinking level (Yussof, 2010) and lastly, a teacher must practise the knowledge he has.

All of the ethics must be practised by Islamic Education teachers to facilitate the delivery of knowledge in the classroom. Good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students need to be established on the basis of compassion and mutual trust. These ethics showed by diagram 1 below:

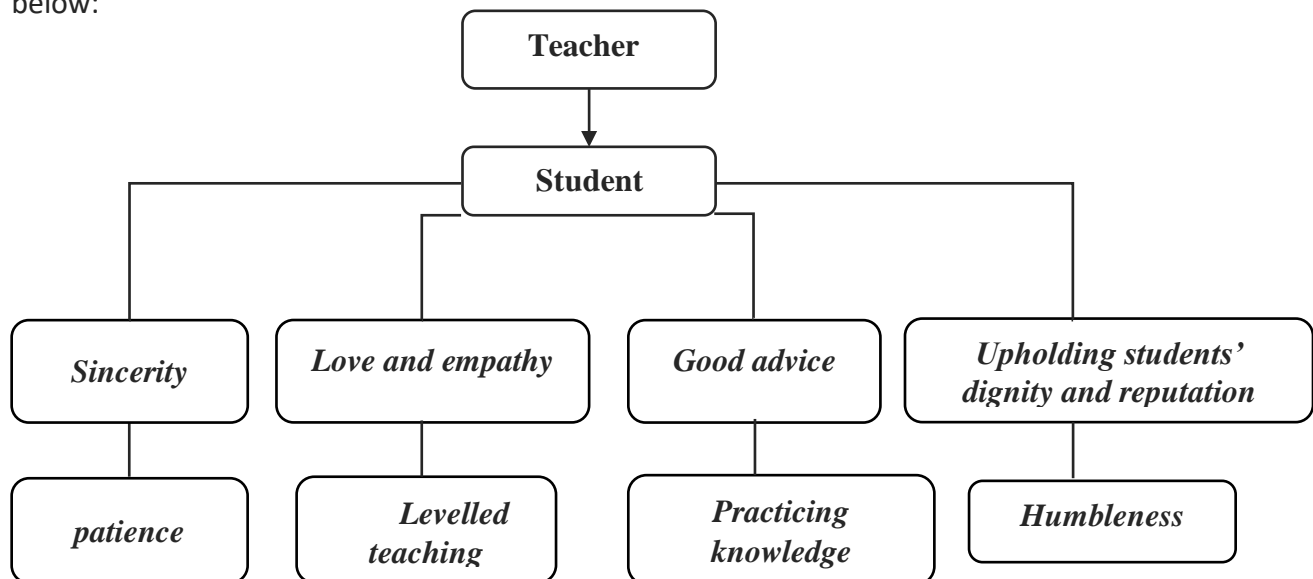


Diagram 1: Imam al-Ghazali 's Teachers' Ethics Model (1988); Mohamed et al (2016)

Based on the elaborations made, teachers ethics model which has been put forward by the Muslim scholars focus on the teachers' spiritual development prior to the beginning of a task in educating the students with *tauhid* values and spiritual as well as good morality (Heidari et al, 2015).

Thus, it is necessary to ensure the souls condone to the *Syariat* as to visualize good actions and behavior when being among students. This is well described in al-Baqarah (2:44);

“ What! Do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own soul while you read the Book, have you then no sense?”

Current Challenges in Islamic Education.

Education scenario nowadays has caused teaching profession to deal with tremendous predicament. According to Sapie Sabilan et al. (2012), global development with telecommunications technology and the internet demands many challenges to teachers to achieve national missions. Each and every one in the society especially parents are emplacing high hope on the teachers to achieve the aspirations to produce a generation who are competent, competitive, dynamic and persevere in facing these challenges by sticking to their knowledge and deference of values (Education Development Plan 2013-2025). The globalization wave which has spread among the society has given a huge impact on the constructions of human morality. There are many different ways of thinking which contradict to Islam. For instance, secularism, liberalism, pluralism and hedonism. These are all threatening the faith and *aqidah*, as well as the religious life of Muslims in general (Shahran, 2017).

The implication that arises from these cause the human civilizations to worship materialism and extreme entertainment, which result in the religious elements being pushed away from many aspects of life (Che Noh, Omar and Hanani, 2014). In this matter, teachers have to face the generation of students known as Generation Y or also known as the Digital Generation (Rahim, 2016). They are born and brought up in the information technology outburst phenomena which are full of freedom and very difficult to control. Gadget games are addictive and change the ways the community interact with each other especially teenagers. This condition has loosen up the bond in families and solicitude in the community has become lesser, it also has caused the firm grip on the religious basis to become fragile. The young generations nowadays are more aggressive, hard to control, hard-hearted, stubborn and egoistic at the same time lose their self-identity (Rahim, 2016).

This scenario has attracted negative effects towards the morality of teenagers. Statistic shows crime cases involving juveniles increase 111% in a year. Based on the statistic by the PDRM, 7816 cases were reported in 2013 compared to only 3700 cases in 2012, which increased by 4116 more cases. Hence, the number of serious cases involving school leavers have increased by 137% equivalent to 2011 cases compared to only 849 cases in 2012. The category of these crimes are related to underaged teenagers of 12-17 years old. The number recorded also increased to approximately 47% over the country. These cases involve murders and rapes (Harian Metro Online, 11th March 2015).

The changing of values has also given effects to the relationship between teachers and students. The bond between these two is no longer strong as before (Shahran, 2017). The teachers' duty nowadays is limited in the school compound, and is perceived as a paid job only, and nothing more. In the spiritual side, this condition has caused the courtesy and the value of knowledge being stressed in Islam become affected. From this point, the Islamic Education teachers should strengthen their personal ethics especially in securing their relationship with Allah. Teachers should improve themselves in knowledge aspects especially having world view and true about Islam as a preparation to face any attacks on thinking and inflicting of bad influence on the Muslims' *aqidah*. The Islamic

Education teachers should also have strong principles and self-identity so as the world's view on Islam itself is strong and firm. The teachers should work on uplifting self-identity and personality by clearing themselves from negative attitude. Moreover, keep practising virtuous values.

Summary and Closure

Ethics or *akhlaq* for a teacher is very important because a teacher is a personality who has influence to accomplish the reasons and goals in education, in which to construct a proper morality as a whole. Recently, teachers do not only need hard skills such as pedagogical skills etc. But also soft skills which focus on the constructions and empowerment of spiritual and soul of teachers. This is due to the fact that teachers are role models who set examples to the students in all aspects. The effects of high personality also can give students a deep understanding of what is being taught and it can attract students and teachers to interact easily with each other (Ahmad, Kamarudin & Jasmi, 2017). Therefore, before a teacher could teach and guide his students to become good individuals, he should beforehand, conquer and practise good moral values in himself as being recommended by the Muslim scholars like Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Al-Ghazali.

The practising and cultivating ethics in Islamic teaching among teachers will produce sincere, humble and virtuous educators. Teaching ethics in Islam is actually portraying Rabbani educators who can uphold the roles as *murabbi* and *muaddib* for ummah. Indirectly, overcoming the ethical conflicts faced by teachers. Only dedicated teachers who are really into this profession will be able to face these predicaments. Consequently, making the goal to inculcate the Malaysian community that appreciate values and ethics in life.

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