

Islamic Education: The Philosophy, Aim, and Main Features

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Abstract

Islam has put greater emphasis on the importance of acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (*'ilm*) than any other human activities. In fact, it makes it compulsory (*far*) upon its adherents, regardless of gender, to learn and disseminate knowledge. The obligation of seeking out knowledge is binding upon every Muslim by the command of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Education from Islamic perspective is often defined by Muslim scholars from three different dimensions which are reflected in different concepts introduced, important among them are; *tarbiyyah* – the process of education that gives emphasis on physical and intellectual development of an individual; *ta'dib* – the process of education that gives emphasis on nurturing good human beings with noble codes of conduct/ethics approved by Islam, so that he may conduct and position himself in society with justice; and *ta'lim* – the process of education that is based on teaching and learning. The concept of education in Islam must take into consideration of all the dimensions stated above. No matter which one of the above concepts is preferable to scholars, it should not be used as a pretext for controversy and intellectual acrimony among scholars, because what does it matter is not the concept, but the practice, methodology and its objectives. Education occupies a significant position in Islamic civilization. The first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in *Sūrah al-'Alaq* (verses 1-4) is about the divine instruction to “reading by the name of God”, thus underscores the *tawqīd* philosophy that education in its essence is not purely a mundane activity, but an integral part of faith. Recently, the concept of education in Islam has been influenced by secularism since the time of colonization and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which consequently resulted in the failure of the Muslim Ummah in its quest for nation building and development according to Islamic perspective. The purpose of education in Islam is to produce a good human being (*al-insān al-ālī*), who is capable of delivering his/her duties as a servant of Allāh (*abdullāh*) and His vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth. This paper is aimed at highlighting the main features of Islamic education, its methodology and objectives in comparison with the current system of education, which is predominantly secular in its philosophy and methodology.

(Keywords: Education, secularism, philosophy)

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1.0 Introduction

Acquisition of knowledge (*'ilm*)³ is emphasized in Islam as an important activity besides its dissemination. It has been made compulsory (*farīq*) upon its adherents, regardless of gender, to learn and disseminate knowledge. The obligation of seeking out knowledge is binding upon every Muslim by the command of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH),

طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم

Acquisition of knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslims⁴

In the Qur'an, those who seek for knowledge are honoured as the group of people who strive to obtain understanding in religious matters (*tafaqquh fī al-dīn*). They are entrusted with the responsibility to disseminate the knowledge and skills they knew to those who do not have the opportunity to learn them.

فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious⁵

In Islam, seeking out knowledge is part of the process of education that aims to enlighten the human soul and enriches the treasures of knowledge that helps in knowing Allāh SWT, the Creator of all humankind and universe. This will instil the sense of responsibility to worship the Creator and obey His command at all times and circumstances as well as to accomplish the purpose of the creation of mankind as stipulated in the Qur'an, that is, to worship Allāh,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I did not create the *jinn* and mankind except to worship Me⁶

Being the vicegerent of Allāh, man is taught about how to conduct his religious and socio-political affairs on earth as means to realize the purpose of his creation in accordance with the absolute will of the Creator. It occupies a significant position in Islamic civilization. In Islam, knowledge that can only be learned through education is a prerequisite of faith and development. The first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in *Sūrah al-'Alaq* (verses 1-4) is about the divine instruction to "reading by the name of God", thus underscores the *tawqīd* philosophy that education in its essence is not purely a mundane activity, but an integral part of faith.

2.0 The Aim of Education in Islam

³ The Arabic word *'ilm* translated into English as knowledge, has wider sense than contained in awareness, consciousness and recognition or familiarity. There are *'ilm* that cannot be acquired by reason, thought or contemplation such as Revelation. The root meanings of *'ilm* are "a mark, a sign like the country's flag, or a signpost, or a track-mark etc., with which they are distinguished or recognized. It means, therefore, to know something in all details, to cognize, to perceive reality, to have faith, to realize, to have sure and definite knowledge". See Afridi, M.R.K. and Ali Khan, Arif, *Educational Philosophy of Islam* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2007), 105.

⁴ Ibn Mājah, Muhāmmad ibn Yazīd al-Qazawaynī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iqyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabī, n.d.), Bāb fa'il 'ulamā' wa al-ath al-'ilm, n.p. 224, vol. 1, 81.

⁵ Al-Tawbah: 122.

⁶ Al-Dhāriyāt: 56.

The aim of education in Islam as stipulated in the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Jedda-Mecca (1393A.H.-1977A.D.) is to produce a good man.⁷ It aims at the “balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man’s spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses.”⁸ It caters for the growth in all aspects including spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively, and incorporate all these aspects in a holistic system of education towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim lies in the realisation of complete submission to Allah as the Creator, on the level of individual, community and humanity at large.⁹

According to Syed Naquib al-Attas, producing a good man can be achieved by inculcating *adab*, because it includes the “spiritual and material life of a man that instils the quality of goodness that it sought after”.¹⁰ Earlier than al-Attas, al-Ghazālī relates the aim of education with the purpose of life that is to achieve happiness by getting close to God. Therefore, the aim of education is “to cultivate in man a personality that abides by the teachings of religion, and is hence assured of salvation and happiness in the eternal life of the Hereafter”.¹¹

It has to be made clear that what makes Islamic education different compared to others is that, education in Islam aims to educate human beings with knowledge and positive skills, and to instil in them good ethical conducts approved by the Sharīḥ. Muslim students have to be aware that the acquisition of knowledge is “not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just for material or worldly gains, but to produce rational and righteous human beings, who are able to meet the spiritual, moral and physical needs of their families, their people and mankind”.¹² An ideal personality like this is a product of education whose philosophy is founded on faith in Allāh and a commitment to realize God-given moral code well-entrenched in the sacred teaching of Sharīḥ.¹³

Simultaneously, education in Islam is not merely of acquiring intellectual knowledge but it is a mean of moulding the nature and character of individuals so that they can collectively represent Islamic values, behave as *khalīfatullāh fī al-arḥ* (vicegerent of Allāh on earth),¹⁴ to serve as witnesses to truth and noble conducts.¹⁵ In Islam, “the concept of knowledge enjoyed such a central place in society unparalleled in other civilizations. It dominated over all aspects of Muslim intellectual, spiritual and social life”.¹⁶

⁷ See Conference Book, First World Conference on Muslim Education, King Abdul Aziz University, Jedda-Mecca (1393A.H.-1977A.D.), “Recommendations”, 78,1; 1.1.

⁸ Sarwar, Ghulam, “Islamic Education: its meaning, problems and prospects”, *Issues in Islamic Education*, London: The Muslim Educational Trust, July 1996, 9.

⁹ Ibid, 9, quoted from the Recommendation of the First World Conference on Muslim Education, Makkah, 1977.

¹⁰ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naquib, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education* (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1978), 1.

¹¹ Nabil Nofal, “Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)”, *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIII, no. ¾, 1993, 563.

¹² Syed Sajjad Hussain and Syed Ali Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education* (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), 1.

¹³ Ibid, 1; Ajijola, Alhaji A.D., *Re-Structuring of Islamic Education* (Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1999), 14.

¹⁴ Man is described in the Qur’ān as a vicegerent of Allāh, the crown and the chief of His creation. Among the greatest gift of God to man is intelligence and knowledge which has to be utilized in the service of Allāh. These gifts render the man to be accountable to God for all his actions and every detail of his life, for the manner in which he employed His gifts and the use which he put his intelligence and knowledge. See Syed Sajjad Hussain, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, 36-37.

¹⁵ “First World Conference on Muslim Education”, 6.

¹⁶ Rosenthal, Franz, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 334.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

And thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the *qiblah* which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allāh has guided. And never would Allāh have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allāh is, to the people, Kind and Merciful.

Being regard as a vicegerent of Allah on earth and the entire creation is regarded as subservient to man where man become the representative of God on the earth. This is because Allah has bestowed on man the most comprehensive ability to recognize, understand and emulate the attributes of Allah and realize them in practice within this life. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are perceived as the most sacred commandments, after the Qur'an which is the divine word of Allah.

3.0 The Concept of Knowledge

Knowledge in Islam is not merely important, it also occupies a dominant position in its doctrine. "It dominated over all aspects of Muslim intellectual, spiritual and social life".¹⁷ It also enables man to grasp the right meaning or the reality of the signs he observes¹⁸ based on Qur'an and Sunnah. Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that true knowledge is knowledge of the Qur'an and His books, His prophets and messengers, the kingdoms of earth and heaven, as well as knowledge of *Shari'ah* as guided by the Prophet (PBUH). Such knowledge is classified under the category of religious sciences, which is not necessarily antithetical to the Muslims' quest for knowledge towards understanding the world around them. Nevertheless, Muslim scholars tend to discard the inclusion of "other disciplines of science related to the world, such as medicine, arithmetic, etc., as part of religious sciences, but classed them as techniques".¹⁹

Modern scholars, such as al-Attas, have divided knowledge into two major categories, religious and rational sciences,²⁰

a. Religious sciences. This include:

- i. The Qur'an and knowledge derived from it such as its recitation, interpretation, *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*.
- ii. The Sunnah: the life of the holy Prophet, the history and message of the Prophets before him, the *ḥadīth* and its authoritative transmission.
- iii. The *Shari'ah*: jurisprudence and law, the principles and practice of Islam.
- iv. Theology: God, His essence, attributes and names and acts (*al-tawḥīd*).
- v. Islamic metaphysics (*al-tasawwuf*): psychology, cosmology and ontology; legitimate element of Islamic philosophy including valid cosmological doctrines pertaining to the hierarchy of being.

¹⁷Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia: Implications for Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996), 78, quoted from Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 334.

¹⁸See *ibid*, 79.

¹⁹Nabil, "Al-Ghazali", 565.

²⁰Rosnani, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia*, 82, quoted from Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, 42.

- vi. Linguistic sciences: Arabic, its grammar, lexicography, and literature.
- b. Rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences:
 - i. Human sciences
 - ii. Natural sciences
 - iii. Applied sciences
 - iv. Technological sciences

Al-Ghazālī considered acquiring religious sciences is obligatory for every Muslim because it is essential for the discharge of an individual's Islamic duties. He classified both religious and technical sciences into obligatory (*far* □ 'ayn- obligation towards the Self) and meritorious (*far* □ *kifāyah*-obligation towards Society). This classification has been for many centuries the cornerstone of the Islamic theory of curriculum development. All the useful sciences such as arithmetic, medicine, agriculture, history and biography, political science, administration, and linguistic are praiseworthy (*ma* □ *mūd*) and their study by Muslims are considered a priority above all other sciences that emphasize on theory rather than practice.²¹

Furthermore, the proper understanding and implementation of *far* □ 'ayn and *far* □ *kifāyah* categories of knowledge according to al-Ghazālī, which was interpreted by al-Attas,

...would ensure the realization of personal and societal welfare. While it is obvious that the latter category of knowledge is directly socially relevant, the role of the former is generally thought to be only indirectly significant. On the contrary, mastery and practice of the *far* □ 'ayn' -- which is not the rigid enumeration of disciplines as commonly thought -- will ensure the proper success of *far* □ *kifāyah* sciences, for the former provides the necessary guiding framework and motivating principles for the latter. Al-Attas reminds us that the assessment of what courses and areas to be taught and offered under the *far* □ *kifāyah* category must not be a matter of personal choice only, but rather, should involve a just consideration of the societal and national needs.²²

In the same vein, according to Tibawi, the succinct personal objective of traditional Islamic education, which is the attainment of happiness in this world and the next, is more concrete and more beneficial to individual citizens compared to the vague general goals of society formulated by modern national governments.²³

4.0 The Concept of Education in Islam

Education in Islam is "an education which trains the sensibility of an individual, in such a manner that their attitude towards life, their actions, decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islam".²⁴ It prepares human beings for holistic life with no separation of this temporary life which ends with death, and the eternal life that

²¹Khan, Mohammad Wasiullah, *Education and Society in the Muslim World* (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1981), 23.

²²Al-Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, 34.

²³Wan Mohd. Noor, "Al-Attas Concept of Ta'dib", quoted from A. L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Tradition and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac & Co., 1972), 207.

²⁴Syed Sajjad, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, 1.

begins after death.²⁵ It is a means of training the body, mind and soul through imparting the knowledge of all kinds i.e. fundamental as compulsory and specialised as optional.²⁶

Education in Islam is not merely of acquiring intellectual knowledge but it is a mean of moulding the nature and character of an individual so that they can collectively represent Islamic values, behave as *khalīfatullāh fī al-arḍ* (vicegerent of Allāh on the earth),²⁷ witness of true, nobility and human greatness.²⁸ In another word, education is “a process through which human beings are trained and prepared in a concerted way to do their Creator’s bidding in this life (*dunyā*) to be rewarded in the life after death (*ākhirah*)”.²⁹

The terminology of education from Islamic perspective is often defined by Muslim scholars from three different dimensions which are reflected in different concepts introduced, important among them are; *tarbiyyah* – the process of education that gives emphasis on physical and intellectual development of an individual; *ta’dīb* – the process of education that gives emphasis on nurturing good human beings with knowledge of the faith and the noble codes of conduct/ethics approved by Islam, so that he may place himself and deal with others in society with justice; and *ta’līm* – the process of education that is based on teaching and learning.

The concept of education in Islam must take into consideration of all the dimensions of teaching and learning activities that reflect the above concepts of *tarbiyyah*, *ta’līm* and *ta’dīb*. No matter which one of the stated concepts is preferable to scholars, it should not be used as a pretext for controversy and intellectual acrimony among scholars, because what does it matter is not the concept, but the practice, methodology and its objectives.

2.1 The Concept of Tarbiyyah

Tarbiyyah is a modern Arabic terminology of education, introduced after the second quarter of the twentieth century, together with the educational reform in the Arab countries (*ḥarakah al-tajdīd al-‘Arabī*).³⁰ *Tarbiyyah* with its modern meaning is not found anywhere in the classical works of scholars. The words and terms used in the writings of the classical scholars to denote the meaning of education are *al-tanṣīḥ* (upbringing),³¹ *al-islāḥ* (reform),³² *al-ta’dīb or adab* (inculcation of good ethical and moral conducts),³³ *al-tahdhīb* (discipline),³⁴ *al-taḥrīr* (purification), *al-tazkiyah*

²⁵ Ghulam, “Islamic Education: its meaning, problems and prospects”, 9.

²⁶ “First World Conference on Muslim Education”, 12-20 Rabi-atthani; 1397, March 31-April 8; 1977, Hotel Intercontinental, Mecca al-Mukarramah, King Abdul Aziz University, Mecca al-Mukarramah, Saudi Arabia, 7.

²⁷ Man is described in the Qur’ān as a vicegerent of Allāh, the crown and the chief of His creation. Among the greatest gift of God to man is intelligence and knowledge which has to be utilized in the service of Allaḥ. These gifts render the man to be accountable to God for all his actions and every detail of his life, for the manner in which he employed His gifts and the use which he put his intelligence and knowledge. See Syed Sajjad Hussain, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, 36-37.

²⁸ “First World Conference on Muslim Education”, 6.

²⁹ Ibid, 9.

³⁰ Mursī, Muḥammad Muniḥ, *Al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah Usūlūhā wa Tatāwwurihā fī al-Bilād al-Islāmiyyah* (Cairo: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1421H), 48.

³¹ Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (808H) in his famous book “Muqaddimah”.

³² Al-ḥāzīmī Khālid ḥāmid, *Uṣūl al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah* (Riyadh: Dār ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1420H), 23.

³³ Ali Idriṣ, *Madkhal ilā ‘Ulūm al-Tarbiyyah* (n.p.: n.p., 1405H), 13.

³⁴ This term has been used by Ibn Miskawayh (421H) in his book *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Tatḥrīr al-A’rāq* and Al-Jāhīz (255H) in his book *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*.

(purification of soul),³⁵ *al-ta'līm* (pedagogics),³⁶ *al-siyāsah* (leadership and good management), *al-nuḥūl wal-irshād* (advice and guidance),³⁷ and *al-akhlāq* (morality).³⁸

“*Tarbiyyah*” is an Arabic word that linguistically denotes the meaning of increase, growth, and loftiness.³⁹ Generally, it is used to denote the development and training of people in various aspects and to describe the process of upbringing the children as the parents provide them with the physical, educational, moral, and spiritual needs to help them grow and become useful parties in the society.

Most of the writings in Islamic education by the classical scholars were associated with inculcation of ethical and moral conduct from childhood.⁴⁰ In the Qur’an, “*Tarbiyyah*” is defined as to “take care of that which is necessary for the development of the one being raised”.⁴¹ The root word of *tarbiyyah* is *al-Rabb* which means “the Lord”, indicates the meaning of “to nurture”. This implies Allāh who nurtures all of the creation with His favours, and He supported them with all of their needs. Hence, Allāh the exalted and the Most High said, concerning the conversation between Mūsā and Pharaoh,⁴²

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يَا مُوسَى (49) قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (50)

[Pharaoh] said, “So who is the Lord of you two, O Moses?” He said, “Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form (provided a suitable mate for all creatures which He created) and then guided [it]”.⁴³

Looking at its both literal and technical meaning, *tarbiyyah* in Islam can be considered as a process of teaching and learning that gives emphasis on physical and intellectual development of an individual as comprehensively defined by Dr. Yāljin Miqdād, “to bring up the child and shape him as an integrated human being including the aspect of belief, health, mental, spiritual, moral and humanitarian”.⁴⁴ Similarly, al-Naqīb defines it as “the educational system which aims to produce a man who applies the Qur’an and Sunnah in his morality and behaviour regardless of the chosen profession”.⁴⁵

³⁵ Muh{ammad Al-Ghazālī, “Naz{ariyyah al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah li al-Fard wa al-Mujtama’”, Nadwah Khubarā’ Usus al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah (conference on the foundations of Islamic education experts), Umm al-Qurā University, Makkah al-Mukarramah, 11-16 Jamād al-thāni, 1400H).

³⁶ Among the scholars who used this term are Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī (620H) in his book *T{ariq al-Muta’llim* T{ariq al-Ta’allum, Al-Nu’mān bin Thābit known as Imām AbūH{ani{fah (150H).

³⁷ Among the scholars who used this term are Ibn al-Jawzī (597H) in his book *Laftah al-Kabd fi Nās{ihah al-Walad*, Al-Ghazālī (505H) in his book *Ayyuha al-Walad*, Al-H{ārith al-Muh{āsibī (243H) in his book *Risālah al-Mustarshidīn*.

³⁸ Among the scholars who used this term are Abū Bakr al-Ajuri (360H) in his book *Akhlāq al-‘Ulamā’*.

³⁹ Arqasusī, Muh{ammad Khair, *Muh{ad{ara{t fi al-Us{ul al-Islāmiyyah li al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 1419H), 18-19.

⁴⁰ Ali{Yunus, Fath{i, *Al-Tarbiyyah al-Di{niyyah al-Islāmiyyah bayna al-‘Asa{lah wa al-Mu’a{s{irah* (Cairo: ‘A{lam al-Kutub, 1999), 42.

⁴¹ Al-Uthaymeen, Muhammad Ibn Saalih, edited by Fahd Ibn Naasir Ibn Ibraaheem as-Sulaymaan, trans. Aboo Talhah Daawood ibn Ronald Burbank, *Explanation of the three Fundamental Principles in Islaam* (U.K.: Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, 1997), 82.

⁴² Al-Uthaymeen, *Explanation of the three Fundamental Principles*, 83.

⁴³ T{a{ha: 39-40.

⁴⁴ Ya{ljin, Miqda{d, “Khas{a{is{ al-tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah wa mumayyaza{tuha{ al-asa{siyyah”, Majallah al-Muslim al-Mu’a{s{ir, No. 6, April, May and June 1976, 89.

⁴⁵ Abd al-Rah{man al-Naqīb, *Al-Tarbiyyah al-Islāmiyyah al-Mu’a{s{irah fi Muwa{jahah al-Niz{am al-‘A{lami{ al-Jadi{d* (Cairo: Da{r al-Fikr al-‘Arabi, 1417H), 89.

In modern time, the term *tarbiyyah* has been used all over the Muslim world to imply education. In fact, Ministry of Education in many Arab countries nowadays, such as Libya, Egypt and Oman are known as *Wizārah al-Tarbiyyah wa al-Ta'līm*. However, in reality, Muslim community is far from properly integrating this definition into the curriculum development and syllabus for different levels of education.

2.2 The Concept of Ta'līm

The root word of *ta'līm* is *ilm*, which means knowledge. It is widely used by the classical and modern scholars to denote the process of teaching and learning, but limited to the process of development of the cognitive aspect of man through the inculcation of the knowledge.⁴⁶ In other word, *ta'līm* means the inculcation and dissemination of knowledge through the process of teaching and learning (instruction). *Ta'līm* is repeatedly mention in the Qur'an to indicate such a process. As an example, Allāh says that He sent the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to teach the people by instructing them to refer to the Qur'an as their guidance,

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error⁴⁷

The term *ta'līm* is also mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (PBUH) that praised those who involve in the process of teaching and learning, and that the best knowledge is those related to the Qur'an,

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

The best is those who learn the Qur'an and teach it⁴⁸

This *ḥadīth* is general, even a parent who teach their children the Qur'an are considered among the best teacher, as the Qur'anic words are the words of Allāh and the best in the world.⁴⁹ Al-Uthaimin added that those who teach sciences of Qur'an and *tafsīr* (interpretation of the Qur'an) are also considered as praiseworthy since they are bringing people closer to the meaning of the Qur'an.⁵⁰

In modern time, the term *ta'līm* implies the above meaning, as well as knowledge delivery system, its methodology, evaluation and assessment. Thus, it does not reflect the development of the man himself as the subject of education in Islam.

It must be noted, however, that both the term *tarbiyyah* and *ta'līm*, if used independently, do not indicate the comprehensive meaning of education in Islam. This is because *tarbiyyah* pertains

⁴⁶ At Such term have been used by Imam Abu Hanifah (150H) in his book "Al-'Ilm wa al-Muta'llim" and Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji in his book "Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum".

⁴⁷ Al-Jumu'ah: 2.

⁴⁸ Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, *Sahih* (n.p.: Dar Taawq al-Najah, 1422H), vol. 6, 5027.

⁴⁹ Al-Manawi, Zayn al-Din 'Abd al-Rauf, *Al-Taysir bi Sharh al-Jami' al-Saghir* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Imam al-Shafi'i, 1408H), 1082, Al-Sanadi, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Hadi, *Hafshah al-Sanadi 'ala Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 3, 87.

⁵⁰ Al-Uthaimin, Muhammad ibn Saalih, *Sharh Riwayat al-Salih*, 1144.

only to the physical, emotional and rational aspects of the human growth as indicated earlier, while for the term *ta'lim*, it is generally limited to the cognitive aspects of education. Therefore, the term *ta'dib* has later been proposed by modern scholars to reflect the holistic philosophy of education in Islam.

2.3 The Concept of Ta'dib

Among the prominent modern Muslim scholar who argues that the concept of education is an inculcation of *adab* is Syed Naquib al-Attas. He emphasizes that education aims at producing a good man can only be attained by inculcating *adab*. Inculcation of *adab* includes the “spiritual and material life of a man that instills the quality of goodness that it sought after”.⁵¹ According to al-Attas, education has been indicated as an *adab* in a tradition,⁵²

أَدَّبَنِي رَبِّي فَأَحْسَنَ تَأْدِيبِي

My Lord educated (*addaba*) me (Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and made my education (*ta'dib*) most excellent⁵³

A man who has inculcated *adab* is called as “a man of *adab*”. A man of *adab* is “the one who is sincerely conscious of his responsibilities towards the true God; who understands and fulfills his obligations to himself and others in his society with justice, and who constantly strives to improve every aspect of himself towards perfection as a man of *adab* (*insan adabi*)”.⁵⁴

Earlier than al-Attas, al-Ghazālī define *adab* as educating a person’s *qāhir* and *bā'in* (internally and externally),⁵⁵ that include four aspects within an individual: speech, deeds, belief, and intention.⁵⁶ Ibn Sina is also reported to have used the same terminology of *ta'dib* to denote education. He emphasized that the process of education begin as soon as the baby completed his two years breastfeeding period.⁵⁷

Al-Attas consistently emphasizes that the purpose of education in Islam is not merely to produce a good citizen or a good worker, but more than that, a good man. In one of his outstanding work, *Islam and Secularism*, he underlines that,

⁵¹ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naquib, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, 1.

⁵² According to scholars of hadith, this chain of this tradition is weak (*d{a'i<f*), while others said it is not a hadith at all. See al-Kanna'ni, Ahmad bin 'Ali, *Al-Imta' bi al-Arba'in al-Mutabaynah al-Sima'*, edited by Muhammad Hassan al-Shafi'i (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 97. However, the lesson and moral of this tradition is in line with an authentic hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): “Indeed I was sent (as a Messenger) to accomplish good moral”. Narrated by Abu Hurairah, reported by al-Bayhaqi, Abu Bakr, *Sunan al-Bayhaqi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), vol. 10, no. 20782, 323. Although the tradition might not be considered as the saying of the Prophet (PBUH), the content of the report is in acculturation to the society and *ummah*. Indeed it is obviously not against the belief (*aqidah*), ethic, moral, and *shari'ah*.

⁵³ Al-Burhan Fawri, 'Ali bin Hassan al-Diqan, *Kanz al-'Ummah li Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Afa'el* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 1981), no. 31895, vol. 11, 406.

⁵⁴ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naquib, *Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 2001), 121.

⁵⁵ Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid, *Rawd{ah al-Talibin fi Majmu'a<t Rasa'il al-Ghazali* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998), 99.

⁵⁶ Asmaa Mohd. Arshad, “Konsep Ta'dib: Teras Falsafah Pendidikan Islam”, *Adab dan Peradaban* (Kuala Lumpur, MPH Printing, 2012), 252-253.

⁵⁷ Ibn Sina, *Tadabir al-Manazil aw al-Siyasah al-Ahliyyah* (Baghdad: Matba'at al-Falah, 1929), 36.

It is man's value as a real man, as the dweller in his self's city, as citizen in his own microcosmic kingdom, as a spirit, that is stressed, rather than his value as a physical entity measured in terms of a pragmatic or utilitarian sense of his usefulness to state, society and the world.⁵⁸

Al-Attas argues that a good citizen in a secular state may not necessarily be a good man; a good man, however, will definitely be a good citizen. As a result, a man who is good in the general society must be good and just to himself first.⁵⁹ It is obvious that if "the employer or state is good as defined from the holistic Islamic framework, then being a good worker and citizen may be synonymous with being a good man. But an Islamic state presupposes the existence and active involvement of a critical mass of Islamically-minded men and women".⁶⁰

In a later work, al-Attas emphasizes that stressing the individual is not only a matter of principle, but also a correct strategy in this period, under the present circumstances.⁶¹ He further argues that stressing the individual implies knowledge about intelligence, virtue, and the spirit, and about the ultimate destiny and purpose. This is because intelligence, virtue, and the spirit are elements inherent in the individual, whereas stressing society and state opens the door to legalism and politics.⁶²

However, al-Attas asserts that Islam accepts the idea of good citizenship as the object of education. The primary focus on the individual is so fundamental because the ultimate purpose and end of ethics in Islam is the individual. "It is because of this notion of individual accountability as a moral agent that in Islam it is the individual that shall be rewarded or punished on the Day of Judgement".⁶³

The concept of *ta'dīb*, if competently explicated, is believed to be the accomplishment of concept for education in Islam, not just the concept of *ta'līm* and *tarbiyyah* which are currently in vogue among Muslims all over the world. This is because, *ta'dīb* includes within its conceptual structure the elements of knowledge (*'ilm*), instruction (*ta'līm*), and good breeding (*tarbiyyah*).⁶⁴ The details are as below:

- a. *Tarbiyyah*: The process of human upbringing by stages.⁶⁵
- b. *Al-ta'līm wa al-ta'allum*: Teaching and learning process which give emphasis to the students' cognitive, intellect and mental.⁶⁶
- c. *Riyā'ah al-naḥs*: Self disciplinary which include physical, spiritual and mental.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naqib, *Islam and Secularism* (Petaling Jaya: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978), 141.

⁵⁹ Al-Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, 32-33.

⁶⁰ Wan Daud, Wan Mohd. Noor, "Al-Attas Concept of Ta'dīb as True and Comprehensive Education in Islam", Chapter XIX, *Comparative Ethics in a Global Age*, edited by Marietta T. Stepanyants, vol. 30, 243.

⁶¹ Al-Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, 6.

⁶² Wan Mohd. Noor, "Al-Attas Concept of Ta'dīb as True and Comprehensive Education in Islam", 244.

⁶³ Ibid, 243-244.

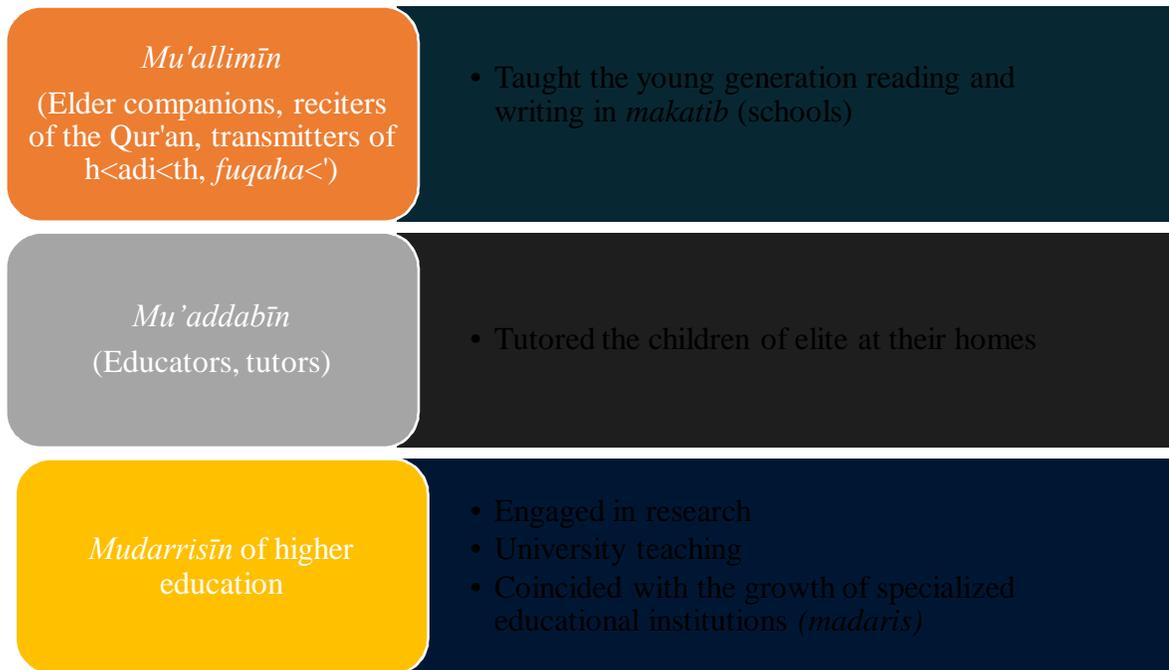
⁶⁴ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naqib, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1980), 34.

⁶⁵ Wan Daud, Wan Mohd. Noor, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1998), 134-136.

⁶⁶ Asmaa, "Konsep *Ta'dīb*: Teras Falsafah Pendidikan Islam", 253.

⁶⁷ Asmaa, "Konsep *Ta'dīb*: Teras Falsafah Pendidikan Islam", 253, quoted from Al-Ghazaḥi, *Ihḥya' 'Uluḥm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Da'ir Ihḥya' al-Turāḥ al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 4, 49.

Despite this concept introduced by al-Attas, al-Ghazza<li< in his work has noted on the existence of the three categories of people in education during the early age of Islam which can be summarized as below:⁶⁸



Having these comprehensive interpretation of *ta'dīb* as the philosophy of education to produce a Perfect Man, the organization of administration and knowledge in an Islamic educational system is recommended to reform a system which reflects this objective. In doing so, the authors believe that there is a need to analyse and review the current educational system in Malaysia from all levels and stages to ensure that the Islamic studies subjects taught in all levels of education is not compartmentalised as an independent subject, but more towards introducing divine revelation (the Qur'ān and Sunnah) as the source of knowledge across all disciplines of science.

5.0 The Influence of Secularism in Islamic Education

Recently, the concept of education in Islam has been influenced by secularism since the time of colonization and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire which consequently resulted in the failure of the Muslim Ummah in its quest for nation-building and development according to Islamic perspective. The purpose of education in Islam is to educate human being with the source of knowledge, i.e., the divine revelation (the Qur'ān and Sunnah), and with its aim to produce a good human being (*al-insān al-ḥalīq*), who is capable of delivering his/her duties as a servant of Allāh (*ḥabdullāh*) and His vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth.

In commenting the current weakness of educational system in Muslims nation, Mohammad Wasiullah noted that:

Muslim communities and nations are far from properly integrating Islamic beliefs and injunctions into the curricula and syllabi of various disciplines for different levels and types of

⁶⁸Wan Al-Ghazza<li<, Abu< H{amid, *Ih{ya<' 'Ulu<m al-Di<n* (Cairo: Al-Mat{ba'ah al-Azhariyyah, 1898), vol. 2, 107-119.

education. The Islamic movement of this century have produced good and valuable literature...For the younger age-groups, for the masses of people who are fortunate to be functionally literate and for the high level technical and professional manpower, there is next to nothing that can adequately disseminate the knowledge of Islamic beliefs and injunctions and cultivate among the learners such beliefs, attitudes and values. No systematic effort seems yet to have been made or planned to meet this dire need.⁶⁹

Modern Western education –so called secularism- has been found to be exaggerating in emphasising reason and rationality over the value of moral and spiritual. It has been seen as encouraging scientific inquiry at the expense of faith as underlined by Muslim scholars as promoting individualism, breeds scepticism, refusing indemonstrable ideas, and anthropocentric rather than theocentric.⁷⁰ While religion and the knowledge related to it is considered as a daily ritual and limited to individual only. Religion is not considered as a way of life as it supposed to be. As a matter of fact, this has resulted in the existence of educational dualism in many Muslim countries all over the world. Hence, revelation that is Qur'an and Sunnah is no longer regarded as a source of knowledge, if not ignored altogether.

Dualism in education denotes two different system of education; traditional Islamic system (Religious Education) and modern secular system (Modern Education). Religion is compartmentalized as one subject namely Islamic Studies, among many subjects taught in the modern secular system. Whether it focuses on Religious Education or Modern Education, these two systems or modes of education are completely independent. Students who opt for religious education are usually exposed to traditional subject matters related to religion, and they tend to discredit considered modern sciences as secondary. As for those who opted for “secular” system of education, mathematics, science, geography, chemistry known as modern education, are their favorite subject matters, but lacking the satisfactory level of knowledge of their Islamic faith, tradition and religious duties.⁷¹

As a result of such compartmentalization beginning from lower educational level (pre-school, primary and secondary levels), students pursue their studies following their preference, either Religious or Modern specialization in the higher level (universities or colleges). They will finally graduate as a professional in either religious knowledge or secular but none will master both. It is a normal phenomenon, that the later will have lack knowledge of religious matters including *far* □ ‘*ayn* while the former will be illiterate in sciences and modern knowledge.

In Malaysia for example, Islamic Studies is marginalized as an independent subject as early as pre-school, primary and secondary level of education. For pre-school level, there is no integration of revelation with modern secular knowledge. Some basic aspects of integration are designed for those Islamic oriented pre-schools.⁷² Different kindergarten followed different syllabus created by their founders and being so due to their ideological preferences. It might be a good starting, however it need to be continued to the higher level of education consistently in order to establish a strong Islamic foundation among individual to be a Perfect Man.

⁶⁹Mohammad Wasiullah, *Education and Society in the Muslim World*, 23-24.

⁷⁰Syed Sajjad, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, 2.

⁷¹Crystal Joan Peter, Rohana Hamzah & Amirmudin Udin, “The Impact of Dualism in Education on Sustainable Development Through TVET”, *Journal of Edupres*, vol. 1, September 2011, 24.

⁷²Among the most popular Islamic pre-school all over Malaysia are those managed under Non-Government Organization such as ABIM (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), JIM (Jemaah Islah Malaysia), HALUAN and PASTI under Parti Islam Malaysia. They have created their own syllabus to ensure the students received a strong basis of Islamic knowledge from early ages.

At the primary level, there are subjects marginalized under *Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education), just a subject which aims at inculcating *Fardu 'Ayn* knowledge including moral and ethical conduct from theoretical aspect. *Pendidikan Islam* in primary level includes the following subject matters in its syllabus:⁷³

- i. *Asuhan Tilawah al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Recitation)
- ii. *Asas 'Ulum Syar'iyah* (The foundation of Shari'ah Knowledge) which include *aqidah* (Islamic belief), *ibadah* (prostration), *sirah* (Prophetic history)
- iii. *Adab* and *akhlak* which include *adab* in daily life, towards parent and family, dealing with society, seeking knowledge, dealing with the Qur'an
- iv. *Jawi Script*⁷⁴

Despite the impressive syllabus formed by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia for primary students, there are mostly taught in schools with exam-oriented methodology. No practical assessment is taken into consideration in evaluating the student, in exception some practices related to *ibādah*. The teachers are also forced to complete the syllabus and ensure that the students are able to answer the examination questions regardless they understand the value of the knowledge and whether they seriously apply the Islamic teaching in their daily life or not. This phenomenon unfortunately has resulted in the utter confusion of faith, decline of good conduct and nominal practice of religious duties that now become a “*neo culture*” among the young Muslim generation. This phenomenon could be reduced if *far* □ □ *ayn* subjects are not merely taught as independent compulsory subject matters, but must be made well integrated across other art, science and technical subject matters. Only with the holistic mode of education as briefly highlighted above would be able to produce a good human being (*in* □ □ *ān* □ □ *āli* □ □) who can discharge his duties to God as His servant (□ *abdullāh*) and to serve his society as His vicegerent (*khalīfatullāh*).⁷⁵

As a subject of analysis, in Malaysia for example, the formation of any educational system must be in line with the National Philosophy of Education which states that,

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 intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

With the current marginalization of Islamic Studies in the current system of education, it is almost impossible to achieve the aim of producing individuals who are “intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God”,

⁷³ See Sukatan Pelajaran Pendidikan Islam KBSR. Ministry of Education Malaysia official website, http://www.moe.gov.my/bpk/sp_hsp/pi/pi/SP%20Pendidikan%20Islam%20KBSR.pdf (retrieved 10th September 2013, 1-18.

⁷⁴ An Arabic alphabet adapted for writing the Malay language.

⁷⁵ The current system require students to learn the subject, not passing the subject. It is also not included as a compulsory subject to entitle the student to enter the next level. This lead to abandonment of putting serious effort in understanding the subject by some Muslims students, let alone to apply and practice it in their daily activities. Furthermore, no serious action is taken to those who apparently against the teaching of Islam such as uncovering the '*aurah*, gambling and committing *munkara*< *t*. So the Islamic education subject remain as a subject only, without application and practice.

as it is impossible to teach the students about morality in life if it is theoretical in nature and taught for purpose of examination, while the students and teachers are not practically applying it in daily life. Thus, many professionals produced from this system are out-of-touch with traditional Islamic spiritual and aesthetical values in their works. As a comparison, the ancient monuments constructed by early Muslim architects such as Al-Hamra' mosque in Cordoba, Taj Mahal in India, Salah al-Din mosque in Egypt, and many more were not simply practical, viable and reliable in terms of their function, but its exquisite beauty survived until today as a reflection of integration of sound faith and mastery of science in the personality of their chief architects. They co-exist with nature, as they do not damage or cause pollution to the surrounding environment such as trees, grass, rivers and animals. These monuments remain survived until now surrounded with natural green trees and plants, river flowing into the mosques for ablution, fresh air inside the building without any need of fan or air condition that may cause pollution to the earth. They attract visitors from all over the world. Certainly, the arts and skills demonstrated by the chief architects in the construction of the monuments were not accidental, but had evolved from sound faith and mastery of nature that take serious concern over the Qur'ānic philosophy of *tawāzun* (equilibrium) and sustainable development and prosperity on earth (□*imārah al-ar*□).

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The basic features of any Islamic constitution as embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah are the six principals of faith,⁷⁶ thus Islamic educational reform has to firstly, inculcate these fundamental beliefs and principles of morality approved by the Sharī'ah in the Muslim minds. In materializing the concept and philosophy of education in Islam, the authors suggest for the following strategies to be practised in the existing educational institutions in Muslim countries, throughout all levels:

1. Education in Islam is not merely of acquiring intellectual knowledge but it is a mean of moulding the nature and character of an individual so that they can collectively represent Islamic values and behave as *khalīfatullāh fī al-ar*□ (vicegerent of Allāh on the earth).
2. Al-Ghazālī classified both religious and techniques sciences into obligatory (*far*□ 'ayn-obligation towards the Self) and meritorious (*far*□ *kifāyah*- obligation towards Society). While Al-Attas divides knowledge into religious sciences and rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences. But both agreed that all come from Allāh.
3. Establishing an integration between Religious Islamic knowledge and Modern Secular Knowledge by not compartmentalizing Islam as only one subject taught in schools, but Islam is a way of life that applies in all sort of knowledge.
4. The concept of education in Islam must take into consideration of all the dimensions consist of *tarbiyyah*, *ta'līm* and *ta'dīb*. What does it matter is not the concept, but the practice, methodology and its objectives.
5. *Tarbiyyah* denote the development and training of people in various aspects and to describe the process of upbringing the children as the parents provide them with the physical, educational, moral, and spiritual needs to help them grow and become useful parties in the society.
6. *Ta'līm* is the development of knowledge through the process of teaching and learning (instruction).
7. *Insān adabī* (Perfect Man) is the one who is sincerely conscious of his responsibilities towards the true God; who understands and fulfills his obligations to himself and others in

⁷⁶To believe in Allāh, the Angels, Prophets and Messengers, Holy Books of Allāh, The Doomsday, and *Qadfa* and *Qadar*.

- his society with justice, and who constantly strives to improve every aspect of himself towards perfection.
8. Secularism in education has resulted in dualism where Islamic studies is compartmentalized into one independent subject or specialization. As a result, a student of such system will graduate as a professional in either religious knowledge or secular but none will master both. It is a normal phenomenon, that the later will have lack knowledge of religious matters including *far* □ *'ayn* while the former will be illiterate in sciences and modern knowledge.
 9. Reformation of Teachers training (KPLI) methodology and evaluation system to ensure that the teachers and educators are welly equipped with sufficient knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of Islamic education before educating and teaching the youth.
 10. Serious assessment on student's Islamic moral and ethical, in addition of examination and class assessment. For example, student who score high marks in examination is not necessary considered as an excellent student unless he/she is also behave.
 11. The main responsibility for students' education falls on parents who take credit for their probity and bear the burden of their errors, while teachers are only sharing part of this responsibility. An understanding that need to be propagated to the society by the stakeholder.

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