



THE CONCEPT OF LIFELONG EDUCATION IN ISLAM

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Abstrak

Lifelong education is a concept of continuous learning from the cradle to the end of life, in line with the phases (stages) of human development. Education is a process that contains the spirit to bring hope to learners. Because humans have desires to do well and be advanced in various aspects of life, a practical level of education is really needed due to the fact that education is the most effective process for humans to meet those needs. Islam as the most perfect religion has the doctrine that human life takes place in two dimensions: the dimension of the world and the dimension of the hereafter. From such a vast scope of life, Islam offers an unlimited education which is practical and applicable.

Keywords: *Concept, Lifelong Education, Islam*

A. Introduction

Education is an integral part of human formation which includes mental, cognitive, and personality factors as the provisions for human beings to achieve success in life. Education is a collective work that takes place in a particular human life pattern, as a process of training and developing knowledge, skills, thoughts and character. Education is an institution or effort to develop the character of a nation, which then shapes humans' mental, cognitive, and personality traits.

Education is crucial for the equal development of humans' mental, physical, and cognitive faculties, such as health, mind, feelings, willingness, social tendencies, faith, and other spiritual aspects. Education makes people more qualified to improve the quality of their lives, from its basic form to a more civilized one. Culture is the result of humans' thoughts, will and works both

individually and in groups that are useful for improving the quality of human life. The more developed the culture of a nation means the higher the education. Likewise, the more developed the culture of a nation means the higher the human dignity. Nata (2003) states that "the failure of education in preparing for the future of mankind, is a failure for the survival of the nation."¹ By the same token, Idi and Suharto (2006) maintain that "the progress of a nation is positively correlated with the success of society in the study and applying its knowledge to the world of work."²

In the teaching of Islam learning already begins since childhood. Islam teaches its followers to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, which means that the obligation to seek knowledge must begin during the childhood time and continues until death in accordance with a popular saying in the Islamic world:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave".³

It is amazing that Islam is keen on educating its followers to continue to pursue knowledge without any regard for the age limit. As long as they can still enjoy life, as long as they can still breathe the air, as long as they can still move, it means they must pursue knowledge. Therefore, as soon as a child is born into this world parents start to teach their children various skills, concepts, and methods appropriate to his or her age. A hadith mentions the obligation to study:

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim male and female."⁴

In Islam it is also said that "whoever travels in search of knowledge then Allah will make it easy for him to reach heaven". It is remarkable that a

¹ Abudin Nata, *Manajemen Pendidikan : Mengatasi Kelemahan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia*, (Jakarta, Prenada Media, 2003) hal. 159.

² Abdullah Idi & Toto Suharto, *Revitalisasi Pendidikan Islam*, (Yogyakarta, Tiara Kencana, 2006), hal. 181.

³ Blog Abu Furqan, *Meniti Jalan Para Ulama*, diakses melalui situs, [http //: abufurqan. com](http://abufurqan.com), 30 Mei 2014.

⁴ Imam An-Nasai, *Sunan An-Nasai, Juz IV*, (Mesir: Darul Wahaby Asy-Sya'bi), hal. 217.

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person who constantly pursues knowledge will be rewarded with heaven. Therefore, knowledge seeking in Islam is religiously motivated. It is a way to please Allah and a way for human beings to go to heaven.

Lifelong education is a concept of continuous learning from the cradle to the end of life, in line with the phases (stages) of human development. Each phase during the development of an individual must be filled with learning. In order to fulfill this developmental task, a learning process has to begin from childhood until the end of life. By continuously learning, one will be continuously relevant and productive throughout his or her life time.

The concept of lifelong learning or also known as lifelong education is applicable anywhere, starting from childhood, adolescence, adulthood, up to old ages. Lifelong learning can be carried out in formal institutions, such as kindergarten, primary school, junior high school, upper school or vocational school, and college. It can also be in the form of non-formal educational activities, such as training, study groups, games, etc.⁵

From the above elaboration, the author concludes that people are the most important element of education. Even education itself in its most basic meaning is none other than an effort devoted to helping people, exposing and discovering the secrets of nature, cultivating talents and directing human tendencies for the good of self and society. It ends with the enactment of socially and psychologically desired changes and attitudes to a happier and more meaningful life.

B. Discussion

Lifelong education is based on the concept that all individuals should have a systemic opportunity, organized for "instruction", study and "learning" at every opportunity. This shows that education takes place indefinitely from birth until death. Besides, Islam also teaches us to learn

⁵M. Nasir Budiman, *Pendidikan Dalam Perspektif Al-qur'an*, (Jakarta: Madani Press, 2001), hal. 11.

not only *qauliyah* verses, but also *kauniyah* verses, or events around us. So it is clear that lifelong education is very true in our lives.

In the current era of globalization, quality education is seen as a briefing activity in humans to welcome change and development. The present world civilization, as a whole, is in a global order sustained by the development of communications, transformation and information technology.⁶

The development of science and technology brings a positive influence, because it can easily solve various problems. But at the same time it also brings a negative influence, because it can create a huge gap in people's lives. Today's modern society, including the Indonesian society, is facing a very rapid development in terms of science and technology capable of affecting the problems of life substance. The Indonesian nation is a nation whose society is very plural, because this nation is an archipelagic country with the largest number of islands in the world with a variety of tribes, languages, customs and cultures that occupy it.

Education in general is believed to hold the power to create a whole vision of life in creating human civilization. Education in the social life of humans is an effort to make human beings realize their true intellectual potential through the process of transfer of knowledge and transfer of values. Education is a long process that takes place continuously, not limited to a certain place or time in order to transform human beings into persons who have spiritual and intellectual power so as to improve the quality of their lives.

Lifelong education is an educational concept that explains the whole event of teaching and learning activities in the process of continuous personality coaching throughout the human life. The process of personality coaching requires a relatively long time span, even lasting a

⁶ Ali Maksum, Luluk Yunan Ruendi, *Paradigma Pendidikan Universal di Era Modern dan Post Modern*, (Yogyakarta, @IRCiSoD, 2004) hal. 279.

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lifetime. Lifelong education is an education that emphasizes the continuity of process since someone is born to this world, both in formal and non formal settings.⁷

This opinion shows education is not only obtained from school or other formal institutions, but also from informal and non-formal education. Education lasts a lifetime through the experiences of human life.

The concept of a lifelong education has long been thought of by educational leaders. Islam has formulated the concept of education for life long before the western people recognized it.⁸

Muslims also emphasize the importance of lifelong education by seeking knowledge from cradle to death. This expression indicates that education takes place indefinitely, such from birth until human life ends. Besides, Islam also teaches us to learn not only qauliyah verses, but also the kauniyah ones, including events around humans. So it is clear that lifelong education is very natural to life.

The birth of a faithful and knowledgeable man is one important step that can restore balance in social life. Man as a creature of God carries this holy mission. Horizontally, a human as khalifah should serve as a role model for others in the universe. Vertically, man as a servant of God must worship and serve his God. The above opinion explains that education is learning experiences that take place in all environments (in a family, school, and community) and last throughout a life time. Through education there is a realm in human beings that will be developed. That affective domain is commonly called feelings and willingness. While the brain is responsible for the activities related to cognition (mind) and the psychomotor realm of skill. Continuous education provides balance between physical and spiritual tendencies, thereby giving birth to a man

⁷ Redja Mudyahardjo, *Pengantar Pendidikan*, (Jakarta, Rajagrafindo Persada, 2003) hal.31.

⁸ Hasbullah, *Dasar-Dasar Ilmu Pendidikan*, (Jakarta, Raja Grafindo Persada, 2009) hal. 63.

who is faithful and knowledgeable so that he or she can carry out their mission as a caliph who is capable of managing nature with full dedication to the creator.

Islamic education is continuous and unlimited by time and place, because education is an endless process (Lifelong Education). So education is dynamic and progressive in following the needs of students. The principle of lifelong education revolves around the idea that education is a continuous process, which begins since a person is born and ends when he or she dies. This educational process includes informal, non-formal and formal forms of learning, both within the family, at school, in work and in community life.

1. The Concept of Lifelong Education

The process of education can take place any time anywhere and anytime without any age limit. The statement is in accordance with the phrase "Education is Lifelong" or "Lifelong Education is in Unility All of Life". Such an idea has also been put forward by John Dewey that "Educational process has no end beyond itself in its own and end."⁹

In this context, lifelong education refers to a reality, a new awareness, a new principle, and also a new hope that the educational process and educational needs take place throughout human life. Thus there is no "late", "too old" or "too early" to learn.¹⁰

There are several reasons that provide the basis for the existence of the concept of lifelong education, among which is expressed by Paul Lengrand. In his book entitled "Introduction to Lifelong Education", Paul argues that the many challenges in varied forms and variations in both developed and developing countries require education to be formulated into lifelong education. These challenges include the rate of change, demographic

⁹Soelaiman Yoesoef, *Konsep Dasar Pendidikan Luar Sekolah*, (Jakarta : Bumi Aksara,1992), h. 20.

¹⁰Sanapiah Faisal, *Pendidikan Luar Sekolah; Di Dalam Sistem Pendidikan dan Pembangunan Nasional* , (Surabaya : Usaha Nasional, 1981), h. 4.

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expansion, scientific and technological innovation, political challenges, information, and crises in the pattern of life.¹¹

The thought expressed by Paul Lengrand then became a reference for UNESCO in offering the concept of lifelong education. The concept of lifelong education was given a special consideration by the Prophet Muhammad in his hadith:

*"Seek knowledge from the moment you are still in the cradle to death."*¹²

This hadith emphasizes the concept that according to Islam humans have a very far reach, namely the world and the hereafter. Because of this fundamental belief, lifelong education in Islam are strongly related to two important aspects; knowledge and faith.

At the level of faith, men from the very beginning of their creation have been blessed by God as the witnesses for Allah's oneness. Allah (Swt) said :

*"And (remember), when your Lord took the offspring of the sons of Adam from their sobbi and God took witness of their souls (saying):" Am I not This your Lord? " They replied: "True (You are our Tuban), we are witnesses". (We do so) so that on the Day of Resurrection you will not say: "We (the People of Adam) are the guilty of this (the unity of God)". (Q.S. al-A'raf: 172)."*¹³

The testimony for God's oneness happens when a human is still in the womb. It is very rational that humans simply do not remember this important event. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah warned about the necessity of education that must be provided by parents. Rasulullah SAW. Said :

*"Every child is born in a holy state (true aqidah), then it is both parents who make her Jewish or Christian". (H.R. Bukhari)."*¹⁴

¹¹Sanapiah Faisal, *Pendidikan Luar ...* , h. 12.

¹².Abi al Husain Muslim bin al Hajjaaj al Qusairy al Naisabury, *Shahih Bukhari*. h. 90.

¹³ Departemen Agama, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahan*, (Jakarta: Rosdakarya, 1997), h.172.

¹⁴ Abi al Husain Muslim bin al Hajjaaj al Qusairy al Naisabury, *Shahih Bukhari*. h. 98.

Based the above elaboration, education at the level of faith actually occurs when a child is still in the womb and then continues in the hands of the parents after the child is born. In Islam, education can be said to have begun as early as when a person chooses his or her marriage partner. This means that the preparation to educate children already begins during the process of selecting a wife or husband.

However, a question needs to be asked as to whether education at the scientific level also begins at the same point as the level of faith? The concept of education in Islam is referred to in a hadith on lifelong education: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to death". This general concept of education above requires an elaboration. Ahmad D. Marimba in his book "Introduction to Islamic Education Philosophy" explains that :

"Lifelong education takes place through two stages. The first stage occurs since a child is born until the child becomes an adult. The second stage takes place from the maturity experienced by a person until the end of life."¹⁵

The concept of lifelong education in Islam essentially leads and guides humans to be able to become *khalifah fi al-ardl* (the leader of the earth) and guide man as a manifestation of God. For in this position man is a creature capable of reflecting on *Asma al-Husna* and life in the universe.

2. Stages of Lifelong Education

The first place of learning for a human being is the family environment. This is the most important stage where a child begins to learn in her or his family.¹⁶ Especially, Islam teaches that learning begins when a baby is still in his womb. In this concept, it is clear that Islam encourages its followers to always learn. A hadith explained:

¹⁵ Ahmad D. Marimba, *Pengantar Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*, Bandung : al-Ma'arif, 1962, h.32.

¹⁶ Uyoh Sadulloh, *Pengantar Filsafat Pendidikan*, (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2008), h. 63.

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عن أبي هريرة: انه أن يقول: ما من مولودا ولد على الفطرة فأبواه: قال رسول الله يهودانه و ينصرانه ويمجسانه (واه مسلم)

"From Abu Hurairah r.a. Said: Rasulullah SAW said: There is no child born except he was born in a state of fitrah, so it is his parents who make him Jewish, Christian and Magian ". (H.R. Muslim)¹⁷

In this hadith it is clear that the role of parents in the family is very important. Parents educate their sons and daughters and form the children's personality in a family environment. Life-long learning in the family environment according to the author can be done in several stages as follows:

a. Childhood Education

Most Aqidah education materials have been packaged in a discipline called "the science of tawheed". It is a discipline that studies how to menthidise (with Allah) with convincing arguments. So basing education on aqidah is important for human children. Because with this education the child will recognize who her God is, how to behave towards her God and what to do in this life as a servant of God. People who learn aqidah will grow into men who totally believe in Allah SWT.

When they are toddlers parents begin to teach them skills in accordance with their ability and phase of development. For example, by teaching or training children to be able to pronounce "shahada" or simple words and learn to speak in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Men who have faith will have in him the character of piety. Piety is the embodiment of faith in action.¹⁸

Islam places this aqidah education at the most fundamental position. It is positioned along with the first of the five pillars of Islam, which is the key which distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims. The

¹⁷Imam Abi al Husain Muslim bin al Hajjaaj al Qusairy al Naisabury, *Shahih Muslim, Juz II*, h. 458.

¹⁸Hasyim Umar, *Cara Mendidik Anak Dalam Islam*, (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu. 2003), h. 168.

title as a Muslim is determined by one's declaration of two sentences of the Creed and how he or she implements them in their everyday life.¹⁹

Every human child is blessed by Allah with tendencies to embrace Islam. In other words, he or she has been equipped with the seeds of tauhid. So the obligation of Muslim parents is to save the seeds of monotheism in their children by giving them the proper education of aqidah. The seeds of aqidah must be well watered, well nurtured and well cared for. They then are expected to grow and become fertile like a beautiful shady tree. Its roots plunge strongly into the ground, with its branches towering into the sky with fruits scattering all over to be enjoyed by everyone. This is the illustration of aqidah which has been successfully grown in a human's heart. All parents would want their children to grow up to be true Muslims.²⁰

To turn this into reality, parent must first become role models themselves who possess a true Muslim personality. Parents should not act hypocritically and at the same time expect their children to be pious. Children are not inanimate objects that cannot judge. They are independent beings who have the same biological completeness as their parents. They have heart, mind, and wills. They do not like hypocrisy as the parents also do not like their children to be hypocrites.²¹

b. Education Kindergarten

At this phase parents have an important role in facilitating their children's learning. Parents begin to have their children learn basic matters from a very early age such as wearing and taking off clothes. They are also expected to teach their children discipline by way of being the examples for them such as by leaving and coming home on time, learning and playing within the specified and

¹⁹ Said Muhammad Maulawy, *Mendidik Generasi Islami*, (Jogyakarta: Izzan Press, 2002), h. 122.

²⁰ Sudirman, *Interaksi dan Motivasi Belajar Mengajar*, (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2004), h. 144.

²¹ M. Niphan Abdul Halim, *Anak Saleh Dambaan Keluarga*, (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 2001), h. 67.

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agreed upon time frames. Learning about clean life can also start to be given at this phase, such as by asking to them to bath, brush teeth, wash hands, and throw waste in its designated place.

At this phase, parents not only facilitate learning but should also be able to become an example themselves. A child usually does something based on what he or she sees. At this point, the shaping of character can also be done by asking them to kiss the hands of parents when they leave or come home from school and to greet them as a sign of respect for the elderly. The parents must also teach their children to pray five times.²²

c. Youth Education

Adolescence is the most challenging time for children. At this phase a child tends to have unstable nature. Therefore, the role of parents in facilitating learning in a family environment is very important in order for children in this phase to develop well, without being influenced by the outside environment, or influenced by their friends.

At this point, the concept of lifelong learning plays an important role because it is at this phase that a child will start looking for her identity, need to know her social world, and tend to have a desire to have more freedom.²³

Learning discipline, having supervision and attention by parents are very important so that the children can perform activities that are positive and develop normally.

d. Adult Education

The concept of lifelong education also holds that adulthood is an important phase in learning. At this phase a teenager who develops into

²² Abdul Karim Bakkar, *75 Langkah Cemerlang Melahirkan Anak Unggul*, (Jakarta: Robbani Press, 2004) h 50.

²³ Muhammad Syarif Ash-Shawwaf, *Tarbiyyah Al-Abna' Wa Al-Murahiqa Min Manzhar Asy-Syariah Al-Islamiyyah, Kiat-Kiat efektif Mendidik Anak dan Remaja*, Terj. Ujang Tatang Wahyuddin, (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 2003), h. 76.

an adult human begins to recognize his or her identity and begin to form certain characters. At this point, usually a person tends to stop learning, especially women after finishing their college life, after marriage, or having children.

At this phase one tends to be more concerned with family, work than learning although during this period learning can still be performed. Therefore, in a family environment, parents should be able to make their children understand that learning is continuous process throughout their life, both formal and non formal.

e. Learning for Elderly in a Family Environment

The concept of education in Islam holds that learning does not recognize age limit, in accordance with the hadith stated above. Therefore, elderly must continue to learn although the learning may be confined to their family environment. At this point, it is not only parents who are supposed to teach their children, parents also need to do the learning themselves. Lifelong education is not only about learning but also about facilitating learning.

Parents who have a lot of knowledge will usually be wiser than others in making decisions regarding any problem faced in life.

C. Conclusions

Lifelong education is the process of continuous education which takes place indefinitely and begins from birth until the end of one's life. Such education is conducted in formal and informal education settings. It exists in family life, schools, work places, and in community.

The purpose of lifelong human education is to develop human potentials in accordance with nature, to raise awareness that the process of growth and development of a human's personality is dynamic.

Lifelong education according to Islam is a concept that provides an understanding to everyone to continue to learn throughout the course of

their lives. Lifelong learning does not have any space or time limit. Lifelong education is also a long-known concept in Islam. The goal is that it is compulsory for every Muslim to know that lifelong education is continuous learning from the cradle to the end of life, in line with the phases of human development.

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