

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN MORAL, CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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Globalization is something inevitable. Globalization goes along with the strengthening of frontiers in almost every aspect of human life. Its hegemonizing approaches penetrate systematically our core foundation related to knowledge, education, human resource development and ethics. Knowledge and education play a very important role in shaping quality human resource in responding to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

In many Asia-Pacific countries, knowledge and education is dichotomous in nature . Dualism in knowledge and education resulted to conflicts in many aspects of human life. The needs of value-laden perspectives in knowledge and education is pertinent in order to develop holistic personalities among younger generation. Integration of knowledge and education is important in responding to the process of globalization. Integration does not only requires conceptual and philosophical understanding about knowledge and education but also the methodological aspects of the subject matter. Teaching and learning are the most important aspects in imparting knowledge. Integrated approach in teaching and learning can give better perspectives on the development of human potentials. Human potentials need to be nurtured through effective teaching and learning processes so that human being posses knowledge and skills together with values and ethics.

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The issues of moral, civic and citizenship education is really pertinent especially to post-independence generation. The wake of globalization resulted to threat and serious challenges to the moral standard, civic awareness and citizenship realization among the youth. Family and educational institutions play significant roles in moulding the character and attitude of the younger generation. Cognitive merit and skill-based achievement alone, do not suffice the objectives of education. A good moral standard, respecting others, involved actively in nation-building processes are the prerequisites for a holistic development.

In many Asia-Pacific countries, there are mixtures of cultures and elements of civilization influence the peoples way of life. Religious traditions play important roles in shaping the identity and the way of thinking of the citizens. The challenges lie ahead are more sophisticated in nature and complex in perspectives. The questions need to be addressed are in what way religious traditions and cultural strengths can become the contributing factors in strengthening the moral, civic and citizenship education. Most Asia-Pacific countries are the consumers of Western mode of education. For the past decades civil society has become an important issue in political and development discourses because of its relevance to the quality of governance, empowering and sustaining the public participation and social awareness while strengthening healthy democracy. In this region, the concept of civil society is yet to flourish. Ethnic and religious differences, class stratification, socio-economic factors offers an excellent areas to be studied and how these factors would shape civil society formation and in turn, how it would affect governance, human rights and democracy.

It is also important to balance our efforts in getting the comparative advantages from the West and the East and at the same time do not marginalize indigenous value-system as the source of dignity. We should not condemn the West and reluctant to reciprocate and benefit the good things from them neither we belittle the East merely because we were at one time the victims of colonization. Inter-civilization dialogue, interfaith understanding and intercultural study about the

Asia-Pacific diverse heritages should be made the focus of teaching and learning. This will enhance people of the religion to appreciate the contributive aspects of the culture, religion and civilization.

The subjects of moral, civic and citizenship education has closely related to religions and beliefs. Spiritual dimensions play salient roles in nurturing the character and personality development. Spirituality in a more wider perspectives is the basis of moral , civic and citizenship education. In any major religions especially to those related to divinity, spirituality is the core not only to the foundation of belief but also to values and ethics. Philosophical religions and doctrines are also having the elements of spirituality.

Spirituality in a wider sense does not limit our understanding on the issue of metaphysics per se, but spirituality reflects the inner factors and intuitive strengths in man that give direction and guidance to the system of believe and to the methods of doing. These factors will lead to human manifestations in all aspects of life. Spirituality should be made as a driving force to develop moral characters and to nurture societal awareness and with a long term strategy to upgrade the quality of responsibility and patriotism among citizens of a particular country. In the wake of globalization, the focus is more on economic growth and getting material return. A rapid physical development without a fair balance in the development of the attitude and mentality will resulted to conflicts. In some countries the development infrastructure in first class in terms of standard but the quality of mentality is still third class in perspectives.

For instance, the dimension of spirituality in Islam are numerous, far reaching and comprehensive. The Islamic spirituality deal with the relationship between man and the Creator, man and his fellow men, man and other elements and creatures of the universe, man and his innermost self. The Muslim has to guard his external behavior and his manifest deeds, his words and his thoughts, his feelings and intentions. In a general sense spirituality acts as motivating and stimulating factor and at the same time as a barometer and driving force to determine human roles. Roles to understand

what is right and what is wrong and to seek what is true and what is false, cherish what is beautiful and wholesome and avoid what is indecent. Truth and virtue are his goal. Just and fairness are his priority. Humbleness and simplicity, courtesy and compassion are his styles. To him, arrogance and vanity, harshness and indifference, cruelty and exploitations contradict to the very nature of spirituality. Islam considers the spiritual meaning derived from submission to the Creator and without it modern life with its materialistic orientations and hedonistic exposures may actually increase agony and human decadence.

Moral, civic and citizenship education are closely related to the issues of *amanah* or accountability. We, our family, our society and our nations are part of the accountability. Spiritual strengths and manifestations that relate to sincerity, trustworthiness, just and fair, wisdom and loving are examples of values and ethics that guide man to be more moralistic, having sound civility and acquiring the quality of good citizens.

The strength of spirituality in man for instance, not only having the purpose to nurture the quality of good citizen but also the quality of good man. By good citizen, man is obliged to follow the rules and regulations within the systems but by good man not only man is a law abiding citizen but also having accountability to the Creator and fellow human. The concept of education for example, to some, relate to the process of transferring or imparting knowledge. The purpose of education is geared towards certification and skills. From the spiritual perspectives education relate to the process of inculcating moral and ethics in man. In other word, education is the process of transforming man. Without moral and ethics, education lost its concept and objectives and strengthen the roles of cognitive domains and neglect the importance of spiritual upliftment.

Moral, civic and citizenship education are interrelated. The binding factor is spirituality. The level of spiritual attainment correlated to the state of character and behavior of a person. Since the beginning of history, societies, even primitive tribal communities, have all developed rules to

regulate the conduct of personal and social relations. But through spiritually, man realizes that the mind and senses are limited and its needs spiritual strength in order to complement.

The threats of globalization need a strong moral character to respond with. Globalization in its essence and strategy is more focus on maximizing the return of physical or materialistic gains or engage in hedonistic activities. The wake of globalization makes the world borderless, unilateral within the global village. Information and communication technology become the catalyst for change. Without moral values, the sense of civility and good citizenship, utilitarianism will prevail and marginalizing the good man.

The state of civility is closely related to the moral strength. Spirituality become the basis of civic consciousness. If a person is conscious about the Creator, spirituality will guide him to be more tactful, strategic and sincere about dealing with things. But if the vertical transaction between the Creator and man stronger, and between man with fellow humans intact, civic-consciousness will prevail. The state of transaction will enhance man to become good citizen. Becoming good citizen is the objective of nation-building but to become good not only strengthening the nation but also strengthening the quality of life. A good man not only paying taxes, devote his effort to the development of the country but at the same time having good values and conduct in doing things. A good citizen practices good moral conduct, sensitive about the state of social environment and physical surroundings and at the same time willing to contribute and even sacrifice himself for the sake of the nation and for the sake of truthfulness.

The Malaysian Educational System for instance is making the agenda of integration as the main focus since the past decades realizing that integration of curriculum is an important strategy to enhance understanding and unity among students of various races . Since globalization is marginalizing a diverse society into a Western-oriented mould, moral, civic and citizenship education is pertinent to safeguard national identity and integrity.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia is taking steps to revise not only the curriculum structure and the methodology of teaching in Moral Education subject but also the training of qualified teachers as well. The problems of the past in teaching Moral Education revolves within an ad-hoc structure without proper planning and effective methodology. The curriculum contents relatively narrow and the emphasis does not reflect the importance of spirituality in a wider perspectives. The revise curriculum contents should cover the areas of spirituality in a comprehensive sense taking inter-civilization understanding as the foundation. This may led to a better world-view and comprehensive understanding about the importance of philosophical values, civilizational understanding, racial harmony and moral responsibilities related to a civil society and citizenship awareness. Civic mentality and awareness should be made the focus in educating younger children and citizenship responsibilities should become the main agenda in inculcating spiritual and moral values not only in formal educational settings but also in the non-formal or private settings. The work-plan for social engineering should take into consideration the importance of moral fibres in strengthening the belief and understanding of *amanah* or accountabilities in all spheres of life.

In the coming ninth Malaysia Plan the agenda for Human Development has become the emphasis in the national development of the country. In education, Human Development should be holistic in nature. Educational achievement does not only refers to academic or skill merits but should also refers to the development of a moral character. A moral character can give the impetus to good values in life and the ability to strive hard dedicated to the process of nation-building. A person having good understanding on the know-how (skills) is at the same time having values to guide the know-what (knowledge) so that knowledge, skills and values moulded together for a better understanding and doing.

Human Development is also relevant to the development of Human Capital in various fields and disciplines. Spiritual foundation within the framework of moral fibers can strengthen the will and determination of a

person in achieving quality goals in life. Human Capital should be holistic and integrated because the nature of challenges now and the future are no longer economic or technological alone but also related to the issues of values, belief, vision and mission. Moral, civic and citizenship education should be moulded as such that can bring strength not to understanding but also to doings.

The development of Human Capital in a holistic approach naturally will produce people of Towering Personalities. Other than having good qualities in undertaking new and creative ventures in science and technology, the humanly factors are always be made the emphasis. Humanly factors such as trustworthiness, dedication, creativity, civic awareness, accountability are always be made the guiding principles in nation-building. Naturally, the ability to benefit the comparative advantages from other traditions and civilization, it may bring the kind of development based on our own mould.

The concept of Our Own Mould should become the niche of nation building. The Muslims for example must be able to address the issues of tradition and conventionality to the issue of change and modernity. The inability to address the issues may bring gaps and conflicts among people of different religious and cultural background.

Asia-Pacific countries should embark a new strategy in enhancing moral, civic and citizenship understanding through education. Since some Asian countries having a strong religious and civilizational tradition of the past, it is important for spiritual values in a comprehensive form become the basis of moral fibres that may lead to a more healthy understanding about differences and similarities for a better future in nation-building.

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