

## Distinctive Feature of al-Zarnūjī's Ideas: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*

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### Abstract

*One of many issues pertaining to the education is the weak foundation of educational philosophy. Through high understanding quality of philosophy, the persons can consistently develop the science learnt. The ultimate aim of this article is to investigate the philosophical inquiry of al-Zarnūjī's ideas in his book Ta'lim al-Muta'allim. The approach used to examine is literature study with descriptive analysis. The results reveal that there are three main emphasis of the distinctive characteristic in this discussion. Firstly, main goal in pursuit of knowledge is classified as religious conservative-based ideology. Secondly, the concept of essential of the human character derives from a good interaction with positive nature. Thirdly, the significant role in performing the human character is through well conducive circumstance meaning that the way considered in choosing both the partners and the educators indicates that the milieu in which each person should interact with has the fundamental impact.*

**Keywords:** al-Zarnūjī, Ta'lim al-Muta'allim distinctive feature, religious conservative, character development, human essential

### Introduction

The issue regarding the educational implementation is one of the cases in human life. Along with the human existence, such educational issues derive from various parts of the background, significantly analyzed and reconstructed from time to time, both in the wide meaning, for example educational policy and politics, and in the tiny meaning, such as the purpose, the method, the student and educator, even its concept of philosophy and its practice. Problem solving of some cases in the human life is sometimes overcome through the education. Notwithstanding, the progress in an education is the first beginning to the advancement in other fields (Tola, 2014, p.57). Furthermore, there turns up the assumption about many issues pertaining to the education; one of them is the weak foundation of educational philosophy (Arifin, 1987). Subsequently, the philosophical inquiry through such investigation to the phenomena, for example, will give a more rational and logical reasoning to resolve it (Kartanegara, 2014, p.20). It means that through the high understanding quality of philosophy, the person can develop consistently about the science learnt.

Thus, such change of its advancement has also affected many cases including the effort and process of raising a standard of education through both its concept and practice. The role of philosophy, thus, is to deeply analyze the real nature of anything comprehensively, systematically, universally and in integrated and radical system in which its result becomes the rule and manual from the development of the exact sciences (Tola, 2014, p.55). The education not only affects an individual, but can also influence the merits for all the society using it (Tola, 2014 : 57). Society in the modern era believed in the existence of education from the general meaning to the featured one.

This regard becomes the development of the measurement strategy and the ways of analysis acknowledgeable to result the credible data. In the scientific modern, it is generally known as 'what is existence can be recognized due to being 'measurable' (Barnadib, 1978, p.13). In addition, the philosophy involves an inquiry into the nature and meaning of reality, life, human beings, and social values. Thus, they are 'very fundamental' when formulating 'the aims of education and the function of educational institutions in a society' (Butler, 1968, p.486).

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Accordingly, these studies regarding the concept of education offered by some experts, particularly in classical time, are necessary to investigate in order to find the distinctive feature of noble values to carry out nowadays. Studies on the ideas of some classical Muslim scholars can provide significant insights for the contemporary educational practices. Notwithstanding, the rich of classical Islamic heritage would be unnecessary, unless its history for fourteen centuries in the past was neglected without being a lesson for the reflection. Furthermore, the past reflection through history is an obligation commanded by God in order to consider the nature life (*sunnatullah*). Moreover, in this case, the rich of Islamic intellectual heritage is necessary to study.

### **A Glance of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim***

One of the Islamic intellectual works embracing the treatise is the kitab *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* written by Syech Burhanul Islam al-Zarnūjī. This *kitab* is widely recognized as a monumental work, as regarded existence (Syamsuddin, 2012, p.5). In addition, this *kitab* is also much used as reference and research material in writing of scientific works, especially in the field of education. This *kitab* is not only used as reference by some Muslim scientists, but also by Western scientists (p.6). In Indonesia, this *kitab* has been studied and scrutinized and is popular among almost all Islamic education institution, particularly in both pesantren (Islamic boarding) due to that this *kitab* has been as a main reference for the *santri* (students) in acquisition of the knowledge, and modern institution, such as Pesantren Gontor (Nata, 2003, p.107). The distinctive feature of this *kitab* is about the matter contained. This, while containing the principle on the pursuit of knowledge, is also more about the ethical foundation for teaching- learning process in the base of 'religious shade' (Syamsuddin, 2012, p.6).

Moreover, as Affandi (1995) pointed out out, this *kitab* has been given some commentaries into seven publications: 1) on behalf of Nau'i (n.d.); 2) Ibrahim ibn Nu'man (996H/1588M); 3) Sa'rani (710-711 H); 4) Ishaq ibn Ibnu Rumi al Qili (720) with the title *Mir'ah al Thalibiin* [reflection rules for students]; 5) Qadi ibn Zakariya al Anshari A'ashaf; 6) Otman Pazari, 1986 with the title *Tafhim al-Mutafahhim* [understanding for who understands]; 7) H.B. al- Faqir, without date and notification (p.67). Meanwhile, according to Yunus (1990), this *kitab* has been given comments by some scholars, like Syech Ibrahim ibn Ismail with the entitle *syarh Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* [elucidation of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*] and Syech Yahya ibn Nasuh (d. 1007 H/1598 M), who is the poet from Turkey, Imam Abd al Wahab al Sya'rani, a sufician, as well as al Qadhi Zakaria al Ansari (p.15). With this regard, as Yunus (1990) underlined, this *kitab*, in particular, characterizes the educational science, and gives such an impact in Islamic value for the sake of seeking knowledge, as the manual for the teacher to educate and purpose(p.155). Moreover, as Bisri (1992) outlined, in order to form the future generations, trained as well as fearful to God (good spirituality and morality), in other words to form such generation with character, there are no particular guidelines apart from the book *Ta'limul Muta'alim*.

### **A Brief of Al-Zarnūjī**

As far as the information of the author name of Ta'lim, there are two names referred to him, namely al-Zarnūjī who is Burhanuddin al-Zarnūjī, who lived in 6th century or 13 century and Tajuddin al-Zarnūjī who is Nu'man Ibrahim who passed away in 6th century (Athiyatullah, 1970, p.58-59). Meanwhile, according to al-Zirikli in the book *al-A'lam*, as cited in Mu'izzuddin (2012), the original name, as the author of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, is Nu'man ibn Ibrahim ibn Khalil al-Zarnūjī (p.2). Al Zarnūjī was among the pioneers in the field of education. Furthermore, he was also one religious scholar of Hanafith Madhab around 13th century, and thus he could be recognized as in year 593 H with his treatise, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (Athiyatullah, 1970, p.58).

In regard to the place where he lived in, it is referred that he lived in Zarnuq or Zarnuj (Athiyullah, 1970, p.58). Moreover, there has been an assumption that the place for his birth was the famous state located at around Tigris River, namely Eastern Turkistan. When assuming implicitly about the date of his life, he did not mention it in his work. However, it is in general that he lived in the last period of Abbasid caliph, where its last caliphate was al Mu'tashim (1258M/656H) (Yahya, 2005). Some of information regarding the period of scholars' life which is regarded as al-Zarnūjī's teacher or with whom al-Zarnūjī had at least corresponded will shed the light on this problem. Among them are (1) Fakhr al Islam al Hasan Ibn Mansur al Farghani Khadikan who died in 592/ 1196 ; (2) Zahir al- Din al Hasan Ibn 'Ali al Marghinani, who died circa 600/ 1204 ; (3) Fakhr al Din al Kashani who died in 587/1191; (4) Imam Burhan al-Din Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Farghinani al-Marghinani who died in 593 /1195; (5) Imam Rukn al-Din Muhammad bin Abi Bakr Imam Khwarzade who died in 491-576 H (Ahmad, 1986, p.14).

In 1203, al-Zarnūjī began with compiling this *kitab*, namely 13 chapters. The reason is that he saw and observed many students struggling for education and for the attainment of knowledge, but falling short of their aim, whether this purpose was ‘modest or splendid’ (Yahya, 2005; Muizzuddin, 2012). In addition, these students, according to him, did not succeed in their goal because they were not cognizant of the right methods of learning, or if they were, they did not abide by them but floundered around and wasted time. Therefore, al-Zarnūjī decided to explain to the student a method of study he had read from his own teachers (Grunebaum and Abel, 1947, p.2).

### Al-Zarnūjī’s Ideas on the Purpose of Education

It has been requisite that each activity is necessary to have a clear purpose as designed to be a well capable plan, meaning that there should not be separated from the design of the model having been planned. In the field of education, the process of transfer of knowledge and value has been the central base in the order for performing human with noble character (al-Atas, 1979). It means that a standard required should be as a quality to decide the success of education. In other words, the purpose of education, in tiny meaning, is the condition required as a result of the study indicated to ‘the human transformation with knowledge and values’. With this regard, the goal is defined as a plan of what is designed by the human being, in which it is placed on the center for the sake of implementing it through self-arrangement.

Moreover, the purpose in this case is highly important, to function as the termination of all the activity and to direct all involved to the education. Such main points in the order for gaining the subsequent goal are the fundamental measurement of the success of a learning-teaching process and confer the worth nature towards these, as outlined by some scholars like Marimba (1989). It means that the quality of goal, itself, characterizes a dynamic nature and evolves the development of human life. While assuming the other scholar in order to make clear understanding to the real purpose of education in Islam, it is an idea that Islamic education is not solely covering the cases regarding the character (attitude), as well as the belief (spirituality), but also more hoping to make worthwhile into the purpose (vision), curriculum and its practical implication.

However, some Muslim educators have observed that human perfection will not achieve without integrating the religious knowledge and the science, and thus have taken an essence on the extent of its spirituality, character and its benefits. Furthermore, the designing purpose is to prepare the student’s ability, encompassing competence and techniques or even the effort to master both these two, in order to achieve the worldly life as to sustain the spirituality and religious activity (Al Abrasyi, 1975, p. 22-25). Pertaining to the purpose of education in Islam, al-Attas (1979) pointed out that the education in which both two models of human are involved in the relationship has the priority in performing the society, good man, as being part of the social elements (p.2-4).

Similarly, according to al-Zarnūjī, the purpose of education based on his *Ta’lim*, the student who has the endeavor to pursuit of knowledge must behave the true intention, as in the following matters: 1) to reach the pleasure of Allah; 2) to achieve the happiness in hereafter; 3) to eliminate the foolishness to him and others; 4) to revive the religious matters; 5) to maintain Islamic religion; 6) to praise the grateful blessing form *aql* (cognitive) bestowed by God and; 7) grateful essence to health body (al-Zarnūjī, p.15-17).

The purpose of education in al-Zarnūjī’s view, actually, is not only covering the hereafter life, but also embracing this worldly life, if exerted as a bridge or facility in gaining the religious aim. As al-Zarnūjī argued, a person is allowed to gather the knowledge in order to gain the position, in case of ‘*amr ma’ruf nahi munkar*’ that is for the sake of implementing the right and reviving the religion, not for seeking the benefit for himself and passion referring to the bad (p.19).

Accordingly, it is necessary for students to contemplate the intention in the learning process, in order that their knowledge well achieved is on the beneficial value (*ibid*). This regard is appropriate to his ‘*syair*’ (poetry) as in the following:

‘that this world is littler than negligible thing, and a person occupying it is more contemptible than despicable thing. With its glamorous essence, this ignores and deafens whoever, and thus he/she is confused without the direction as the *hujjah* (evidence)’ (*ibid*).

### **Philosophical Inquiry into al-Zarnuji's Purpose of Education:**

As referred to the educational philosophy by al-Syaibani (1979), there are three areas for the purpose of education, namely 'individual, social and professional' (p.399). Subsequently, the concept illustrated by al-Zarnuji, such as (1) to eliminate the foolishness; (2) to praise the grateful blessing from cognitive aspect (*aql*); (3) health body (*jism*), if analyzed by using al-Syaibani's philosophy, can be classified to 'the individual development'. It is because those three purposes will make influence to the attitude of the person in performing the activities.

While, the other purpose, such as (1) to revive the religious matters; (2) to maintain Islamic religion; (3) to eliminate the ignorance in the society, can be analyzed as 'the social orientation', in which these three functions above are well-matched to the social community at large. Subsequently, this description can be analyzed that the clever and pious ability of the person, according to al-Zarnūjī, is not only for personal level, but also by having to transmit and spread to the society.

Pertaining to 'the professional purpose', this is in accordance with the purpose for the person to achieve the knowledge in the order for gaining 'the position at an institution', for instance. However, the attainment of that position should be made for a benefit of the society at large. It is obvious, thus, that to achieve the place among the society is through the knowledge. Accordingly, these three purposes should be based on for the sake of achieving God's pleasure in order to be happiness in hereafter life, as the motivation for morality in Islam (Halstead, 2010). Similarly, as Azim (1973) argued, the significant base of purpose in pursuit of knowledge, in Islam, is that the student can perform to worship into God, due to the main point into the righteousness, the benevolence as well as the exquisite goal (p.276). With the similarity, it is clear that al-Zarnūjī placed gaining 'God pleasure' as a primary and main priority for all the purposes.

### **Religious Conservative Based Purpose of Education: al-Zarnuji's Overview**

According to Ridha (1980) categorised the main ideology of Islamic education into three terms that are 1) *al muhafiz* : religious conservative ;2) *'al dini al 'aqlani* : religious rasional ; 3) *al zara'i* : instrumental pragmatism. The religious conservative ideology in expounding and interpreting the universal reality is based on the religious discourse, and thus all pertaining to those involved in educational elements, such as the knowledge classification and ethics for both student and teacher, are to be based on that ideological term. In other hand, the rational religious philosophy is not much different with the previous one. There seems rather different to emphasis the rationality in accordance with the education in which they build the basic principles of educational thought in base of the human, knowledge and educational reflection. While, the ideology of instrumental pragmatism considers these principles of education based on the side of practical use, and thus is more concerned into the practice. In other words, all the knowledge should be classified into the base of usability and functionality in life.

The purpose of education as illustrated by al-Zarnūjī, in case of observing the ideology of Islamic education described by Ridha (1980), can be categorized into the religious-conservative based philosophy. Since, the emergence of educational theory is based on the foundation of the true disposition in Qur'an, which is the orientation in both religion and philosophy of a nation in interpreting the reality of life, the phenomena and the human existence demonstrate the thought of Islamic education into determining the purpose, the scope as well as the knowledge division. In other words, considering al-Zarnūjī's position on the religious conservative label is due to his interpretation to understand the universe in base of the religious instruction and thus, its implication to all regarding the purpose of education should be begun with it. It means that the religious values have to absorb all the activity of learning in pursuit of knowledge.

### **Implication of the Religious Conservative Ideas**

There are some of the consequences due to that of al-Zarnūjī's view, both its benefit and weakness. However, the benefit is such responsibility of the moral conduct in which its appreciation to the regard of Islamic education is highly concerned, and even as the manifestation for the extremely religious responsibility. The task of learning and teaching is not only as the profession or human duty, but it is more as the demand of religious obligation (Yahya, 2005, p.4). This is, of course, as the central point in Islamic education, while the human being commitment in both the concept and practice of education.

Furthermore, both the demand of *'insaniyah'* (human nature) and *'Ilahiyah'* (God right) if not as one right side, then which one is to be first preceding is *Ilahiyah* endeavor.

However, about its weakness, the term of knowledge in the Qur'an and Hadith characterizes absolutely unlimited value, while it will be limited if only on the regard for religion. Therefore, the tendency for gaining the spirituality, which is prominent, impacts the notion in Islamic education into the neglect of the worldly regard with all the utilities in which all these can be utilized appropriately. Its educational thought is widely concerned into the religious duty, so that the life affairs will be taken by non Muslim. This assumption emerged and at once made the obstacle for the Muslims in the order for *'amar ma'rūf nahī munkar'* as well in performing the social community with noble character.

### **Essential of Human Character: al-Zarnuji's Overview**

Prior to further discussion about the process of human character, it is worthwhile to expound the essential of human character and influence on the outside world. As Bigge (1982) pointed out, such divergence of human nature, accordance with the outside of world, for example, can be categorized as 'good, bad and neutral', while their action outside of the world encompasses 'active, passive and interactive sense' (p.16). Furthermore, the ideology considering that the essential of human character is the bad active nature is such as 'Theistic Mental Discipline' arguing that while the human essential basically on the bad nature, there is nothing else on the hope into good. Here is an example that the person, if let live alone, then his essence which will grow and develop is his/her bad nature. Therefore, through cultivating the education, it can bridle his/her bad essence and direct it into well being condition.

On the other hand, in regard to the good active nature, it will, without affection to the whole outside, maintain to emerge the good values. The consequence in the education is, therefore, that both students and teachers are well prepared to optimize the development of the individuals. Considering the neutral passive, however, it means that the human being has the neutral essence probable to be passive character, average between good and bad nature, and even towards the outside influence, namely education.

Furthermore, regarding the ideology of neutral interactive nature, it is nearly similar to that of neutral passive feature, but in accordance with the essence from the outside, there is any process to interact with and accept the influence from the outside also. The role of education, thus, will not enable to perform the students as well hoped, since they can give the response as their feedback. In further, the result, as the process of the formation between the essential and the outside influence, will emerge some types of personalities.

Meanwhile, al-Zarnūjī, based on analysis on his remarks, indicates that the essential of human being is 'good interactive essence' or active positive theory as outlined by Bigge (1982). Accordingly, it means that basically, the person has the good potency as well as active nature towards the outside world. Similarly, in other statement, he also simplified as in the following:

'those who have the good conduct but then being damaged due to the others' bad behavior, and in other hand, the quick impact from the ignorant person to the learned one is like a fire positioned on the cinder, then it will quench' (p.32).

In other words, it has characteristic about the cooperation between heredity potency and educational milieu.

### **The Process of Development of Human Character**

Regarding the process of development of human character, it is worthwhile to view some theories. According to the Empiricism, the development of human character is influenced by the milieu or environment, including education. This theory has been pioneered by John Locke (1632-1704) popularly known as 'Tabularasa' or Empiricism (Purwanto, 1990). It means that each individual is born like a blank paper or white paper and thus the milieu will affect the color on that paper. In addition, the experience derived from milieu will decide the individual character. It can be seen that this theory is optimistic because the role of milieu is regarded to have a significant role to construct and develop human potency as expected.

Different with Empiricism, nativism pioneered by Athur Schonpenhauer (1788-1860) argued that the human character development is determined by human nature as the essential, and by the human talent (Suryabrata, 2002). Hence, the process of character development is just only the talent and can not be influenced by outside factor, such as education and environment.

Therefore, such these potencies derived from human talent, rather than environment impact: both education and experience. It is true that the educational implementation to perform the human character expected without support of the talents will not be achieved. However, Convergence theory is different with both two above, which is significantly opposite. This theory, pioneered by William Stem (1871-1983), argued that both 'human talent or nature' and 'milieu' significantly influence the process of human character development (Purwanto, 1990).

Pertaining to the process of development for human being, explicitly, al-Zarnuji did not explicitly mention, while implicitly he is more indicated to the convergence idea. This means that the way of al-Zarnūjī in choosing both the partners and the educators indicates that the milieu to interact with appropriate partners and teachers, has the fundamental effect, both good and bad one. Moreover, as Bisri (1992) argued, it is like '*al-ṭab'u saraqā*,' which means that 'the attitude or behavior is infected to have the seriously significant effect to make influences of character'. In other words, the significant role in performing a character of person is through well conducive circumstance. So important in selecting the teachers, al-Zarnūjī cited a wise saying as in the following:

in case, one student went to seek the knowledge, then should not hastily select to the educator ; while firstly, it should keep to stay for two months and then think about to determine the appropriate educator (p. 28).

Accordingly, from some educators, with their more capable knowledge, sometimes, the way they used to teach is different with the usually employed patterns by student, and because of this, he goes away to change another educator, so that this learning will not be blessed (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008, p.28-29). With this regard, it is sure to analyze in nowadays the manner usually used in higher university, for example, depends on the student in choosing the supervisor as the educator appropriate to his/her capacity of the knowledge. In addition, determining the appropriate teacher is necessary for student in order to endure with him and to absorb the knowledge well.

In other hand, besides on choosing the appropriate teacher, it should be for the student to select the appropriate partners (p.31). As in al-Zarnūjī's kitab, a student should select the appropriate colleague with the following criteria such as, diligence (*zaka*); learned person ('*alim*); continuity (*istiqamah*); and self refinement (*wara*'), and should keep away from the partners who are lazy, atheism, talk more, blighter and detractor. As in the poetry saying as follows,

'do not ask the person's conduct, but observe who is colleague. It is true that sometimes the student follows his partners. Moreover, in chase a bad one, then should avoid, and if good then should chum in order to acquire the guidance' (p.31).

Furthermore, the environment can affect the person, in base of this ideology. Both self-condition and milieu one can also merge to attract and affect each other continuously in the cooperation. Thus, al-Zarnūjī is more concerned to emphasize the social environment in which his manner in organizing a well conducive good by choosing the appropriate partners and teachers can be clearly viewed. In addition, he emphasized '*tawakkal*' (the trust nature in God), being a characteristic of Nativism indicating the human nature as the basic potency. Therefore, it is more appropriately to assume that al-Zarnūjī's view can be classified into the convergence, with the basic assumption that certainly the human being should be developed through both the heredity and the environmental affection, or even the interactive cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

From the discussion above, the concept of al-Zarnūjī's education lies on category of religious conservative ideology as in his ideas of purpose of education. It can also be argued that the purpose of education should be intended to individual development, social orientation and professional goal with having to empower seeking 'God's pleasure'. Pertaining to the concept of essential of the human character, it seems more concerned to the well conducive interaction, deriving from a good interaction or in order words with positive nature. It indicates that, basically, human profile is of absolute good and responds to the social circumstance with the characteristic to the process of incorporation. Moreover, the significant role in performing human character is how to choose partners and select teachers appropriately in which each person should interact with has the fundamental impact. In further, it looks that he has also much been to emphasize the arrangement of social milieu.

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