

Hong Kong Secular Education is Crumbling

News:

South China *Morning Post* reported on 12th February, a schoolboy has died after falling from the rooftop of an apartment building in Ma On Shan, the third Hong Kong teenager to die in such circumstances within eight days. The 15-year-old fell from Kam Pong House in Kam Tai Court on Ning Tai Road at about 10am on Sunday. The boy's death follows those of two other schoolchildren over the Lunar New Year holiday. The Education Bureau is considering recommendations from the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides, which was established after a spate of student suicides last year. They include looking at ways for schools to provide better mental health support to students, as well as suggesting they work harder to promote students' non-academic achievements. There have been more than 70 student suicides since 2013.

Hong Kong's high-pressure education system is seen as largely to blame, with too much focus on score-oriented assessments putting pressure on students, experts contend the issue of youth suicide is complex and that the seeds of the problems are being sown much earlier than we realise. Chan Yu-ling, a young international school student, described local schools as like a "prison". "School was like a prison to me. I wasn't allowed to move around, drink water, eat, go to toilet or talk randomly in classroom. I couldn't even run during recess," said Chan, who added that she once completed her homework only at around midnight.

Comment:

This is one of the capitalist secular education characteristics which is to emphasize material and quantification of academic success. Developed economy countries such as Hong Kong may not face problems such as lack of educational facilities, teaching staff or technology in schools. Rather this capitalist country is now facing a more fundamental issue i.e. **the damage of educational purpose**. Where Hong Kong's secular education has already failed since the beginning in defining the ultimate goal of its education, as a consequence they clearly failed to produce human beings who are mentally healthy and have strong personal integrity, on the contrary their education systems became the gates of death for their future generation.

An education that is far removed from religion, and being a commodity of capitalist business, will never be able to build, improve, and elevate the dignity of people's lives, but rather the education system becomes a servant to produce profits for the business. In addition, the education system that focuses only on individualistic purposes would only educate individuals in order to have the ability to find a job for personal success, but poor in morals and integrity of character (*akhlaq*). It makes for many in the young generation who become trapped in mental issues and social diseases such as drug abuse, promiscuity, brawls, and more other issues. This condition is clearly very far from the progress of a dignified society.

In stark contrast to Islam where Shaikh Naquib al-Attas defines, "*The aim of education in Islam is therefore to produce a good man... the fundamental element inherent in the Islamic concept of education is the inculcation of adab (manners)*". Who is a good man or the civilized man? In the view of Islam, such man is he who knows his God, knows himself, makes the Prophet Muhammad as *uswah hasanah*, follows the path of the heir to the Prophet (ulama), and a variety of other criteria of a good man.

Education in Islam is a conscious, structured, programmed, and systematic effort in order to achieve education purposes. The purpose of education outlined by Islamic Shariah are to form a pious man who has an intact Islamic personality (*shakhsiyyah Islamiyya*), composed of mentality/thought and disposition/behaviour based on the Islamic Aqeedah, and to create ulama, intellectuals, and experts in an abundant number in every field of life that is a source of benefits for the people, who serve the society and civilization - and will make the Islamic state a leading, strong, and sovereign state so that Islam as an ideology dominates the world. With such purposes of education, the output generated from Islamic education is the generation of pious, submissive, and obedient to the laws of Allah (swt), not the generation of poor morality, weak, and lacks of *ghirah* (spirit) in religion. This true purpose will secure the progress and dignity of the society. Insha Allah

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