

Realizing the True Islamic Education Policy

News:

After 70 days of ruling Malaysia, the Pakatan Harapan government is still in the race to fulfill its promises to the people of Malaysia. On one hand, various policies of the new government have caused uproars of varying degrees; and on the other hand, the promised media freedom and freedom of expression have manifestly opened up the society to a plethora of opinions and ideas that may end up driving Malaysia to a very different societal nuance than what she is used to. This is especially felt by Muslims in facing the bombardment of liberal ideas where their reaction to the onslaught is far from appeasing. A particularly interesting case is the recent suggestion by the former Information Minister, Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin (Zam) to have tahfiz schools closed. Indeed, private tahfiz schools lack effective control and monitoring and this should have been the main focus. However, Zam intently criticized the establishment of tahfiz schools as 'non progressive' and urged for these schools to be closed. Despite explaining his reasons for the criticism, it did catalyse further attacks on religious institutions and Islam in general.

Comment:

Education is undoubtedly very important for the development of our future generation. The future of the Ummah is closely linked to the quality of the new generation that leads her. Hence, emphasis should be placed on the establishment of a state education policy to produce this generation of leaders and peoples with a strong Islamic personality and are masters of the various fields of knowledge. Zam's absurd suggestion is clearly based on a generalized, biased and crooked view of tahfiz and Islamically oriented schools. As had been mentioned earlier, there are private tahfiz schools which are problematic. There are also Islamically oriented schools that have integrated tahfiz, which are well organized and have been producing outstanding students. By looking at the problems in a deep manner, it will be clear that the problems arise not from the 'non-progressive' nature of Islamic education but from the state's weaknesses in monitoring, as well as the weakening of operational and financial management of some private tahfiz schools. Hence, obviously the solution is not to close tahfiz schools, but instead, establish restructuring and monitoring of these private Islamic schools and should include the formation of a standard curriculum for tahfiz institutions.

All fine and well, but is it? If one studies the fundamental issues related to the establishment of Islamic oriented institutions, one will observe that these schools flourish because Muslims are well aware that secularization of education results in the grooming of younger generations that lack Islamic personality. Consequently, concerned parties begin to establish Islamic schools focusing on Islamic education. This state of affair is totally unacceptable in Islam. Under the Islamic authority, the

Islamic Khilafah, only one stream of education is allowed to exist (Article 177 of The Draft Constitution of the Khilafah proposed by Hizb ut Tahrir):

“The state’s curriculum is only one, and no curriculum other than that of the state is allowed to be taught. Private schools, provided they are not foreign, are allowed as long as they adopt the state’s curriculum and establish themselves on the State’s educational policy and accomplish the goal of education set by the State. Teaching in such schools should not be mixed between males and females, whether the students or the teachers; and they should not be specific for certain Deen, mazhab, race or colour”.

The existence of a streamlined school system will not only foster unity among the citizens of the State, but also ensure a uniform curriculum in achieving the Islamic educational objectives. In addition, the education policy is to uphold Islam. The uniformity of the curriculum can also ensure the containment of external elements such as liberalism, while strengthening the dissemination of Islamic culture which include, among others, the memorization of the Quran. The solid, uniform curriculum will also integrate the core elements of science and technology. Private schools are still allowed to operate, but should follow the curriculum and regulations of the state educational policy. The Islamic State education policy does not differentiate the trends that focus on 'ukhrawi' affairs with 'worldly' affairs. The division between the two components is borne out of secularism that separates religion from life. Islamic history has proven that scholars and scientists of Islam are not only masters of science and technology, they are also memorizers of the Quran from a very young age. Furthermore, the role of the Quran is not merely to be memorized; the Quran is the main reference, in addition to the Sunnah, ijma' of Sahabah and qiyas in regulating all aspects of life. The education policy of the Islamic state aspires to build this mindset.

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