

SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOUNDATION OF VALUES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEST PERFORMING TEACHERS

Syihabuddin

Department of Arabic Education, FPBS, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
syihabuddin@upi.edu

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Abstract

The welfare of a nation is determined by the quality of its education. The quality of education is in turn determined by the quality of teachers, and the quality of teachers by the values that guide them in performing their profession. Teachers who perform their profession based on values are best performing teachers. The question is what spiritual values guide them in fulfilling their job as a teacher? This is the main question in describing the values that become the foundation, guidelines, and motivation for teachers in performing their profession; the values that are apparent in daily life behaviors as the educational principles that become the authentic character of the teachers. To meet this goal, narrative inquiry method was employed to analyze the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of best performing teachers from the story, history or activities they recount. In order to answer the main question of this research, 24 best performing teachers from various levels of education from West Java and other provinces were gathered. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the researcher that plays the role of research instrument. Then, the data were transcribed so that each respondent has his or her own "narration". After getting coded and numbered, the sentences were processed with monocorn version 1.3 to find the frequency of keywords that will narrow down to certain themes potential to be the research findings. The findings were then analyzed, compared, and contrasted to tendencies as conclusions strengthened with discussion from theoretical perspectives.

Keywords: spiritual pedagogy; foundation of values; spiritual-based education principles

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INTRODUCTION

What are the main problems faced by education in Indonesia? In general, the problems can be classified into empirical and theoretical problems. Empirical problems, among others, pertain to the low quality of human resources, such as indicated by the Human Development Index (HDI). According to Yasin (2014), in 2013 Indonesia ranked the 121st out of the 187 countries. The HDI of Indonesia was even below the average set by the UN. The ranking becomes one of the proofs of the lack of competitiveness of Indonesian workers, both nationally and internationally.

One of the causes of the low HDI of Indonesia is the large number of under-educated workers, namely those graduated from junior high school or the education level below it. In 2013, the number of low-educated workers reached 65.94%. Although the number was lower than the one in 2006 (75.6%), it is still considered too high, so that it gives no contribution to the improvement of welfare and health quality. According to Yasin (2014), the proportion of these less-educated workers reflects the low economic competitiveness of Indonesia compared to that of other countries.

The low number of educated workers is in line with the low number of doctoral degree holders per one million populations. The data reported by OECD

indicate that most Indonesian scholars are bachelor's or master's degree holders, not doctoral degree. This is because the number of Ph.D. graduates per one million Indonesian populations is still very low, even much lower than that of the neighboring country, Malaysia. The number of Indonesian Ph.D. graduates is only 97 people per one million populations (Yasin, 2014).

Meanwhile, the theoretical problems are related to curriculum, instructional evaluation, and method. These problems are continuously discussed among bureaucrats, researchers, and academicians. Among the three problems, instructional method seems to be most discussed by researchers and academicians.

In relation to the theoretical problems mentioned above, a question arises of whether the existing education theories are appropriate to answer the challenge of the era. Which theory is the most effective and applicable? In terms of source, is the theory coming from cultural sources more able to solve the problems than the theory taken from modern philosophy and science? Is an effective theory one that is universal, that can be applied anywhere and to anyone? Or, should the education theory be formulated based on the cultural characteristics of each society, or even should be in accordance with the religion that one upholds?

The questions narrow down to a search for the source or foundation of education theory development. In the researcher's opinion, the existing education theories are developed from three sources, namely philosophy, science, culture, and religion. Some of the theories are developed from one source only, and some others from the combination of the two or three sources.

One of the theories or concepts of education developing in the last two decades that has attracted the attention of educators and researchers in the western world is the spiritual pedagogic theory. This theory attempts at implementing values originated from religion and culture in the pedagogic practices at schools. The values become the encouragement, motivation, and control for teachers in performing their profession. The values become something so transcendental for teachers that the guide the teachers' overall behaviors in heading towards more noble values. Teachers do not work to merely fulfill the duties or do principal's commands, gain material benefits, and achieve joy and success in career. They also work in order to achieve something more valuable, noble, and useful than merely the material or worldly goals.

Based on the above explanations, a question arises concerning what values are made the foundation by teachers in performing their profession. The same concern has been addressed by previous researchers. Beazley (1997), for instance, has found that there are three important dispositions of teachers which are important for effective teaching performance, namely honesty, humility, and service to others. Boone, Fite, and Reardon (2010) further investigated these spiritual dispositions in relation to teachers' perception of their own spirituality and leadership. The study was conducted to teachers who were new to their jobs. Meanwhile, according to Harlos (2000), three most important values to spiritual pedagogy are humility, compassion, and simplicity. These studies, however, did not really investigate the values deemed important to spiritual pedagogy from the teachers' perspectives. Therefore, the question of what values considered important to spiritual pedagogy by teachers remains unanswered.

To answer this question I have analyzed the perspectives of best performing teachers using the narrative inquiry method (Heigham & Croker, 2009) in the framework of an interdisciplinary study of various activities related to the efforts of triggering and analyzing stories about life experiences, results of interview, daily notes, memoirs, autobiography, and biography. The research is focused on the values made as the foundation in teaching.

The data were obtained by asking open-ended questions to best performing teachers at the level of regency, city, province, or nation. There were 25 respondents, consisting of male and female teachers of primary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational high school, and Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic school equivalent to senior high school). They have varying work experiences. Although characteristic-wise they are very varied, they have one thing in common, namely the predicate as best performing teachers.

SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGY AS AN APPROACH

Tracking the history of types of approach in the field of education science, it is clear that there have been various and numerous approaches. However, the existing pedagogic and instructional approaches can be classified into several groups. Shimabukuro (2008), quoting the ideas of Cambron–McCabe and Dutton, asserted that the approaches in teaching and instruction have experienced changes and development that narrow down into three types of approaches.

First, transmissional approach. This approach positions learners in the passive position, as receiver of materials, and object of instruction. Teachers have the position of material deliverer, while students merely accept the things that their teachers deem as necessary to for them to know. Such instruction can be found in various levels and types of education, especially in Indonesia. The approach departs from the view that teachers are instructional sources, human beings with great knowledge.

Second, generative approach. This approach is based on several theories, such as constructivism, collaborativism, cooperativism, exploratorism, inquiry, and discovery. In this approach, students are encouraged to create knowledge constructed on the basis of their own knowledge through interaction with learning materials, teachers, and facilitators. Students' knowledge is created layer by layer.

Third, transformative approach. Effective pedagogy is not limited to the activities of delivering and creating as well as constructing knowledge in the classroom, but education should reach a broader context. Through this approach, students can penetrate into a deeper layer of instruction, which provides meanings to think critically about the world. Thus, learning is simultaneously an individual and transformative process. This approach is based on social activities. Through this approach, learners are encouraged to use their knowledge in social transformation.

In addition to the three types of approaches, recently there is a tendency towards pedagogic practices based on spiritual values. The tendency has given birth to a new field of study known as spiritual pedagogy. In this approach, education and instruction is implemented by teachers based on the values that also become the foundation of their profession, such as affection, patience, humility, sensibility, tolerance, and the like values. Understanding the origin of this spirituality is very important in developing the millennial generation, so that teachers should be continuously guided in order to adjust their knowledge and skills to the needs of the contemporary world. Teachers should be aware that today's students are the native speakers of the language of computer, video games, and internet.

In order for teachers to be able to implement the spiritual values in the classroom instructional activities, Shimabukuro (2008, p. 510) revealed the following characteristics of teachers in spiritual-based instruction.

First, teachers understand children's spiritual development and experience. Teachers are

challenged to explore children's development, interpret the children's physical and cognitive development, both one related to learning interest and one related to the spiritual development.

Secondly, teachers take the contemplative attitude. They should always think of their students' future, knowledge, and ways to guide them. From this contemplation, it is expected that creative and innovative ideas will be created to improve the teaching practice.

Third, teachers show magnanimity. This is shown by being open to the presence and dynamics of the holy spirit within themselves and the school community. Magnanimity here has a broad meaning, which among others include being magnanimous towards different views among teachers, children's displeasing behaviors, and less conducive school environment.

Fourthly, teachers have interpersonal sensibility in performing their profession, namely during interacting with students, other teachers, school principal, and students' parents.

Fifthly, teachers do various activities with the main motivation to teach. If teachers look weak and unmotivated, students will be negatively impacted: their motivation to learn will decline. In this case, teachers should take advantage of instructional approaches that can activate students' motivation.

Teachers who activate the spiritual values within students through certain instructional models should have spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership should be guided and developed through routine spiritual practices, so that eventually they will embody into the characters of a teacher.

The foundation of spiritual pedagogy explained above is implemented in various fields of education. The spiritual dimension is the element made the foundation in education for the field of social work (Moss, 2011) and management of education (Kernochan, 2007; Wiersma, 2004). Moreover, Kernochan (2007) concluded that the spiritual values of prudence, compassion, and sincerity, have made teachers' teaching practices to be more effective. These values encourage teachers to be more accepting of students' various conditions and more caring and warmer to them.

To understand the concept of spiritual pedagogy, the concept of spirituality is explained in the next section.

SPIRITUALITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

What does spirituality mean? According to Harlos (2000), spirituality is a concept that is difficult to define, as experts have different perspectives in their understanding of this concept. Nonetheless, they regard the concept of spirituality as containing one key component, namely value, so that the definition departs from a simple to more complex definition. Harlos quoted Schneiders' argument who defined spirituality as teachers' conscious experience in integrating the actual life with the values regarded to be the most noble. In linking the activities to values, teachers attempt to make the transcendental values guide their whole behaviors.

Spirituality is regarded as an eternal value that directs human life, so that the value is the motivation and trigger for human beings to do certain activities.

The key element of spirituality is the noble value, transcendence of the noble value to the teachers' selves, and noble value that results in the motivation to work. Spirituality represents meaningfulness in order to obtain peak experience, both within and outside the scope of work, to master oneself, the thought, feeling, and behavior, to head towards the noble value. This value will influence teachers in educating and teaching their students.

The value that guides life can be derived from the religion which gives birth to sacred values, and it can also originate from culture, resulting in secularly spiritual values. Both values can stand side by side and lead human beings towards the noble value.

However, some experts see that the spiritual dimension is not relevant to the academic world, as it orients towards value and subjectivity, while academic and science fields refer to neutrality and objectivity. Therefore, traditionally western science has an inharmonious and cold relationship with spirituality. Nevertheless, spirituality and western science have the same concern with instruction and intellectuality.

The similarity between religion and spirituality lies in their expression of the presence of God and the noble or transcendental values in human life. Meanwhile, the difference is in the fact that religion is rooted from the past teachings and beliefs, while spirituality is the practice of a belief. Spirituality is inclusive, whereas religion is related to social institution, beliefs, and ritual practices. Spirituality is the life experience arising as a fundamental element that determines an individual's life

In relation to religion-based spirituality, Crick & Jelfs (2011) are in the perspective that spirituality means that admitting religious experience, being open to the view of other religious believers, and admitting oneself as the world's citizen. The awareness necessitates sensibility of the relationship between oneself and others, other beings, and God. This kind of spirituality pertains to the awareness and self-reflection as human beings; the awareness as human beings to search for authentic ways of living the real life.

In practice, spirituality can take two directions: internal relationship with oneself and external relationship with others, the universe, and God. In the context of education, spirituality encompasses development of teacher's capacity in order to be able to build conscious relationship with students through pedagogic interventions.

The urgency of teacher's capacity development based on spiritual paradigm has also been expressed by Augustine (2014). He reviewed a certain amount of literature and found several topics of studies, such as a critical study on the origin of the roles of spirituality in developing human identity, the role of spirituality in religious and equality education, the roles of spirituality in maintaining social justice, and the relationship between spiritual pedagogy and critical pedagogy.

According to Augustine (2014), spirituality is recognition and celebration that is unavoidable in the relationship between “us,” namely the relationship that is based on love and affection among human beings. Practicing spirituality will create perfection, meaningfulness, and the attainment of human life goals.

Accordingly, Dillard (2008) and Augustine (2014) described a number of the characteristics of the spiritual pedagogic paradigm, as follows.

First, externalized. Spirituality means presenting or letting the undiscovered experience within us emerge in a clear picture.

Second, political. The implementation of spirituality in the classroom means being fully aware that teaching and learning is a political activity involving hegemony, in which there is a party that reinforces power, and there is a party targeted to be dominated.

Third, risky. Spirituality is an activity that has goals; it is not something that is instantaneous; it requires motivation, rejects disturbance, especially while maintaining justice and rights.

Fourth, cultural. Teaching and learning with spiritual paradigm is inherently global and does not prioritize any perspective. Cultural identities are rejected and ignored in order to move freely, solve various limitations that accompany the identities inherent in a society.

Fifth, holy and based on truth. Power, knowledge, and truth cannot be separated from the individuals belonging to a community. It is this truth that should be respected in the community of a spiritual class and school.

Sixth, dialogic. A spiritual class offers dialogic communication between students and teachers. In a dialogic class, a number of cultures describing certain identities have the opportunities to be expressed, questioned, understood, and even celebrated.

Seventh, liberating. The community of a spiritual school should be liberated from a dominant and opposite community. Teachers and students are liberated in a spiritual class.

Eighth, redeeming. In a spiritual class, teachers have the characteristic of a human who is able to reduce the suffering in the world. A spiritual teacher is one who asks to his/her students, “What should you do in order to learn? What can I do for you?”

Actually, what is expressed by Augustine (2014) is in line with that of Miller and Athan (2007). According to these two experts, in order to be a teacher who is able to educate based on spirituality, an individual has to start with developing spiritual awareness and experience of the preservice teachers, so that s/he will be able to practice the experience later in his/her profession. In a spiritual class, students are invited to bring their real life stories into the class, namely personal, raw stories, or perhaps experiences that were ignored by others, and even stories that are thought to be deviating from the norms. Teachers and students together explore the stories and then discuss the influence, acceptance, elimination of excess from the environment and from others. Direct and

imaginative experiences should be given special attention in the framework of the positivistic analysis in order to build a dynamic discussion about their experiences.

A spiritual class has four key characteristics, namely giving students the authority to express their ideas and experiences, giving opportunities for students to keep progressing by maintaining their experience, welcoming students to the classroom and filling the classroom with permissive communication activities, and grounding and implementing knowledge practically.

Building a spiritual class such as put forward by Miller and Athan is aligned to the term contemplative pedagogy postulated by Grace (2011). This pedagogy attempts at developing students’ self-awareness through first person investigation, namely a study on oneself. Thus, such teaching and learning is also called a contemplative practice. This practice lasts in the classroom with students sitting in a meditating position, practicing affection, walking while meditating, listening in depth, thinking in depth, having guided meditation, observing the universe, studying themselves, and the like. In a contemplative classroom, a certain period of time is allotted for students to be completely silent and the students are invited to realize the presence of the silence. However, in another contemplative class some other activities are done comprehensively, namely examination, question-answer session, and discussion. Contemplative pedagogy is empirical. It is not something related to instructional goals, outcomes, or efforts. Contemplative pedagogy instead is something related to living the life, tracking one’s evolution, so that his/her presence in the universe can be beneficial for other beings.

The theoretical explanations above show that the field of spiritual pedagogy encompasses the meaning of spirituality in education, sources of values, characteristics of a spiritual class, and characteristics of teachers in a spiritual pedagogic class. Spiritual pedagogy is a practice of education that is based on the sublime and transcendental values, both those originating from religion and culture, that guide, support, and motivate a teacher in doing his or her profession; values that are inherent in the teacher’s behaviors as an authentic way of living his or her life.

METHOD

As has been previously explained, spiritual pedagogy is a study of noble values originating from teaching experience, religion, culture, or other sources. The values encourage, motivate, and guide teachers in performing their jobs. This “spiritual” term has philosophical, functional, and individual nuances. The values are the results of rational, radical, and comprehensive thoughts while being a teacher or lecturer that can functionally be used as the *khittah* in educating learners. They are different from one individual to another. The difference is mainly caused by differences in academic background, experience, and the context of actualization.

To find further about the sources, types, ways to obtain, and which values are important to teachers, the results of an interview to 25 best performing teachers teaching at various school levels, starting from school to national level, will be elaborated in this section.

RESULTS

Out of the 25 interviewed, 44% of the best performing teachers report that the values they make the foundation in performing their jobs are responsibility, religiosity, sincerity, discipline, patience, determination, honesty, justice, exemplary, innovativeness, creativity, responsiveness, and adaptiveness to changes or challenges. As many as 20% of the teachers make religion as their foundation in performing their job, and 16% choose the foundations of faith and piety. Meanwhile, the rest of them choose the foundation of ideology, equality, affection, earnestness, *zuhud*, *istiqomah*, moral, ethics, and noble morals. The teachers' perspectives are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Values as the Foundation for Professional Practices

No.	Types of Values	Frequency	
		F	%
1.	Religion	5	20
2.	Faith and piety	4	16
3.	Responsibility, religiosity, sincerity, discipline, patience, determination, honesty, justice, exemplary, innovativeness, creativity, responsiveness, adaptiveness	11	44
4.	Ideology	1	4
5.	Equality	1	4
6.	Affection	1	4
7.	Earnestness, <i>zuhud</i> , <i>istiqomah</i>	1	4
8.	Academic challenges	1	4
9.	Moral, ethics, and <i>akhlak</i>	1	4
Total		25	100

Some respondents explain the values that they make as the foundations for their professional practices, as follows:

- Responsibility or commitment to the profession as teacher that they have selected.
- Sincerity and consistency in performing their jobs.
- Discipline and self-confidence in performing their jobs.
- Patience, friendliness, flexibility, and full of understanding in encountering learners.
- Determination and not easily giving up when facing challenges in their profession.
- Having the awareness that educating is not merely transferring knowledge, but also directing and guiding learners in order to be individuals who are independent, tough, noble in morals, and capable in both academic and non-academic aspects.

- Being honest and just in performing their jobs and facing the stakeholders of education.
- Being a good example and developing oneself to achieve and give the best services to students and stakeholders.
- Being innovative, creative, and developing one-self continuously.
- Maintaining the trust given by parents, leaders, and the stakeholders.
- Appreciating the fact that each learner has different potentials, skills, and needs, and trusting that all learners can learn.
- Being responsive and adaptive to changes in science and technology.

The above values can be formulated into three groups, namely religious values or beliefs, scientific values, and cultural values. Out of the three values, religious values are the primary foundation. With regards to their significance, the teachers believe that honesty, sincerity, self-confidence, humility, determination, diligence, optimism, the attitude of never giving up, and discipline as the primary values to be possessed by teachers.

The above values are obtained from the teachers' religion, culture, family, or a combination of the three, such as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Source of Values

No.	Source of Values	Frequency	
		F	%
1.	Oneself and family	1	4
2.	Religion	10	40
3.	Religion and culture	11	44
4.	Religion and family	2	8
5.	Government Regulations	1	4
Total		25	100

Religion is selected as a source of values by the respondents because it is complete and even perfect to guide humans in their lives in achieving *maslahat* in the world and the hereafter. If an individual performs an action based on religion, the action will bring about fruitful and beneficial results with positive impacts on him/herself and the environment. In addition, religion as the source of values is vital in guiding a balance life.

The values are obtained through various ways. 36% of the teachers gain the values from their experience, 26% from contemplation, and 26% from parents, family, friends, or results of reading. There are also some teachers who obtain values from the activities of social meetings, learning outcomes, and daily activities. The ways of obtaining the values can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Ways of Obtaining Values

No.	The ways	Frequency	
		F	%
1.	Advice from parents and family, friends' opinion, reading	6	24
2.	Contemplation or reflection	7	28
3.	Self and others' experience	9	36
4.	Official meeting	1	4
5.	Learning outcomes and direct practice	1	4
6.	Daily activities in the classroom	1	4
Total		25	100

Table 3 shows that the above values are obtained by teachers from experience, both their own and others', or through learning and examples shown by parents or people in the environment. The teachers reflect on the experience, learning, and examples until they gain their essence. However, there are also teachers who obtain the values directly from *quraniyah* and *kauniyah* verses. One of the teachers asserted that, "There is so much greatness of God and countless pleasures God has given me and my family. What a pleasure when we apply one of the Hadiths which say, 'Whoso expands the troubles of others in the world, then God will stretch our troubles in the world and the Hereafter'". This hadith encourages me to apply the value of caring and compassion in everyday life.

Even though there are numerous values possessed by the best-performing teachers, there are some of the most dominant values in carrying out their profession. The results of the interview show that 28% of teachers stated that the most dominant is religious values, followed by the value of responsibility and discipline as much as 28%, the value of faith and piety as much as 12%, and sincerity value as much as 8%. Other values are the value of *akhlakul karimah*, social, and moral values. The complete questionnaire results are presented in the following table.

Table 4
The Dominant Values

No.	The Dominant Values	Frequency	
		F	%
1.	Faith and Piety	3	12
2.	Religiosity	7	28
3.	Responsibility and Discipline	8	32
4.	Sincerity	2	8
5.	Pedagogy and Professionalism	1	4
6.	<i>Akhlakul karimah</i>	1	4
7.	Social	1	4
8.	The values associated to the four teacher competencies	1	4
9.	Moral	1	4
Total		25	100

In addition to the teachers' views presented in Table 4, the teachers believe that other values that are quite important for a teacher are discipline and high working ethos, noble morals, and modesty. Other

respondents emphasize the values of sincerity, responsibility, determination, honesty, and patience.

When the data in the table are combined with the ones from the questionnaires that cannot be presented in tables, it can be stressed here that the most important value for a teacher is religiosity. This value broadly covers other values. The value of religiosity can also be said to be a dominant value because it already includes other values from culture and philosophy.

CONCLUSIONS

Spiritual pedagogy is a field of study that elaborates experience, knowledge, and intuition through the activities of *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, discussion, and reflection, thereby resulting in certain values that motivate, encourage, incite, enlighten, and become the basis for the individuals possessing the values to perform their professions as educators, teachers, or parents.

The spiritual values include, among others, religiosity, sincerity, discipline, affection, responsibility, patience, hard work, and consistency. The values are obtained by the teachers through three main sources, namely religion, culture, and experience through the activities of reflection, discussion, and family indoctrination.

Among the most dominant values for the teachers in doing their jobs is the value of religiosity. This is so because religion is the primary source and the most complete guideline for human beings in living their lives in the various fields. Hence, the education implemented by the teachers on the basis of religious values can be categorized as spiritual pedagogy if the values really color the education processes operationally, actually, and consistently.

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