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Life Style Education: Are We Prepared for Changes?

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Abstract

The public should be aware of the sudden change of life style of some people that makes their life completely different from their previous ones. All of us must be ready to face any circumstances from this manifestation in the future. The rich, wealthy and famous should be made aware that that type of life style is not wrong, but they should also be taught how to follow a normal way of life. Proper guidance and counselling on how to live normally needs to be provided with especially designed lectures and classes. Bringing these "students" to remote villages where the poor and the disadvantaged live may help them to understand the hardships of life around them. Having a short intern period within such a community will help them further understand the real life of the majority in their country. Furthermore, if they are always taught in an environment of luxury and are never faced with a normal education system and style of life, a major problem arises: if, in the future, our country is led by such graduates, who never went through our normal education system or lived a normal style of life, how can they understand and lead the majority in our country? This paper discusses this phenomenon.

Keywords: Life style, education, culture shock.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human life styles are changing by minutes, both within traditional societies and within the most modern societies in industrialized nations. Just thirty-five years ago, we bought things with cash, then along came checks, followed by debit cards and now we pay with credit cards linked to e-banking systems. When we wanted to celebrate a wedding of one of our children, we had to spend weeks visiting close relatives and kinfolk to inform them and invite them to attend the wedding. Now, we can "sms" using one of many kinds of hand phones and even smart phones or we can use a

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"tablet" with add-on technology to e-mail or call them for super-fast communication, we don't even have to type our sms-s if we have the latest hand phone which uses voice recognition to type up our sms.

For centuries, it took humans months to travel from one continent to another and with very high costs and great risks. Now, it takes only hours with low cost flights that are way safer than before. It used to take weeks to finish a tailor-made suit, now it takes only minutes to finish a high-quality suit with the most up-to-date style using computerized machines. It used to take years to complete a small house where the carpenter might fall in love with the daughter of the owner of the house he was building. In many cases, too, the man carpenter could disturb the harmony of the house owner's relationship, due to having long close contact with the wife on a daily basis during his work on their house.

It used to take years and years to learn how to read the Al-Qur'an since the pedagogy, methodology, methods, techniques and teaching materials used were not scientifically designed. Now, it only takes a few months to master as much as one could master in a year, a long time ago. It used to take weeks to correct the exam papers of our students and now, using the most up-to-date systems and technology, it only takes minutes. The computer, initially generated by Imam Al-Khawarizmy (Knuth, 1980), can make short cuts and provide digitally computerize answers to anything within seconds.

It took *tabib* (a traditional medicine man) decades, trying different kinds of treatments and medicines to find a cure for a disease and now, using the most modern medical equipment, some cures can be found within minutes. Not only do we know what we can see, but we can also see beneath the outer layers of our skin and human tissues. The nerve systems in our brain used to be something beyond human eyes, now we can see traces of electrical currents in our nerve systems and use this knowledge to make a detailed analysis and to prescribe proper treatment for our good health. It is no longer a dream to see things, thousands of meters below our feet, in the core of the earth. With new technology in the geosciences, we can now see all kinds of minerals and fluids deep in the earth that can be extracted to support our life in the modern society (Mandal, 2016).

A boy or girl from a remote village, in a traditional or sub-traditional society or even from a poor family in a modern society can turn into a "rich and famous" young person in just a few days once having scored high in her country's "idol" contest. Now there are the Indonesian Idol, American Idol, Korean Idol, Taiwan Idol, Malaysian Idol, Japan Idol and other TV Idol contests to determine the best young singer or other art performers in every country. The moment, someone wins, they have to face "an amazing new life" and then they suddenly must adjust their current lifestyle with the "new life" which they had never even imagined before. Many end up succumbing to the different kinds of temptations and develop "bad" habits that are unacceptable in their society and are ultimately self-destructive to themselves. Only a few are able to resist the temptations of wealth and fame to become peers within the community. There is a big gate that they each must find and go through, which I call the "New Personal Life-Style Education".

The problem is that there is no school where a person may learn how to adjust when entering this new life. It is a life within a life but very different from where they came from or where they are now. The environment is so different and those who are the gatekeepers of the New Personal Life-Style Education are not trained in how to

assist the newcomers with proper guidance and counseling, and hence not able to help the new comers to adjust themselves properly and acceptably within their new community. The gatekeepers at the gate of the New Personal Life-Style Education open their arms wide to welcome these *nouveau riche* newcomers warmly, befriending them to benefit from their new wealth, introducing them to life-style changes like consumptive spending, gambling, alcohol, free sex lifestyles, smoking even drugs which can very quickly devastate the lives of these newcomers incessantly.

2. ARE WE READY FOR CHANGES?

USA Today newspaper on June 11, 2005, published a report by Stephanie Armour about the many problems for young new generation performers entering into their new life style. For example, when a traditional village dancer developed into a famous "erotic sexy dancer" of *ngebor* dance in Indonesia, she suddenly became very famous and received many glamorous gifts and high profile invitations to perform in many shows, not only at three-star hotels but also at "seven-star" hotels with very high payments. She became rich all of a sudden. Her life changed dramatically and her prior knowledge and previous life styles could not blend smoothly with the new life style that she was catapulted into. In just a few weeks, a lot of controversies appeared in the media that belittled her religiously, customarily and also morally.

Many great young artists in the USA, Europe (East and West), Asia, ASEAN and other parts of the world, after winning national and/or international awards/idol competitions, have to enter a new world of life-styles at one of various different levels, which can be categorized as follows:

- almost similar with minor adjustment or without adjustment,
- slightly different with adjustment,
- different which may need minor consultation for adjustment with the new life-style,
- a very different life-style that requires much consultation and advise, and
- when the newcomers are not able to adjust themselves with the new life style and need major, intensive and continuing consultation and advice.

Many of these young people are at a "cross roads" between their previous life-style and the new life style they are entering into. They have "inner confusions" as to how to adjust to it smoothly and how to avoid those aspects of the new life style that are too contradictory to their earlier morals, religious beliefs and customary backgrounds. Some sociologists call it "culture shock" that occurs when someone is not able to adjust culturally with his previous situation (Irwin, 2007; Oberg, 2006; Pedersen, 1995). These shocks are a personal disorientation of a person when experiencing a new way of life within a new society. Kareem Abdul Jabbar, a very famous NBA star for decades, entered his new life style smoothly since he was prepared and guided by his *iman* (faith in God), but not Mike Tyson. Tyson did not know what to do with the "sudden huge amount of money" that he earned within a very few minutes fighting in the ring. These two celebrity figures may be good samples of why it is important to have "life style educators" to prepare the new celebrity, the new rich and famous and other "new celebs" in our society.

The *iman* is something that is hidden in our heart. It is a metaphysical aspect in Islam. It is different from "faith". It is not a blind belief, but a belief with proper reasons to believe. It is a part of Islamic theology (Ali al-Jifri, 2012). In several cases in

Indonesia, even the *dakwah* (preacher) "celebrity" might have forgotten their *iman* when they became famous as public figures, earning so much money through their "talk shows" and travelling intensively to all provinces in the country. Then they, too, may start to abuse their *iman* verbally when speaking or talking about others. They may behave "immorally" by marrying an underage child which is against the laws of child protection. They may marry one, two or three beautiful young girls without the knowledge and without consultation with his previous wives as required by the marriage systems in Islam, and as he would have said and advised others in many of his *dakwah* in the country. Once he does that, the public will turn against him and his celebrity status will fade right away, the public will not come to hear him anymore and, on many occasions, the public will also condemn him publicly.

The "teachers" who keep watch at the gate to the new life-style are not trained with philosophy, approaches, pedagogy, methods, techniques and teaching materials that will support the "newcomers" to enter the new life-style of "high" society, but rather will drag the newcomers with uncommon philosophy, approaches, pedagogy, methods, techniques and material wealth that will destroy many of them. There was a very popular singer whose voice was beautiful to all ages of Indonesians, children, teens, and adults, the elderly and even religious figures of all faiths. The lyrics of her songs were morally acceptable in and for all Asian societies. Unfortunately, she was pronounced dead from a drug overdose that she hit up on in a seven-star room of a five star hotel. Her songs can be heard every day on Indonesian radio stations, daily, even until today. She would surely have had a better and longer life if there had been good teachers, good gatekeepers, at the gates of Her New Life Style. For reasons of privacy, her name is not given in this article.

The "new teachers" at the gate did not do what should be done educationally and acceptably for the public. Instead, these teachers will teach these newcomers how to find the best tattoo designer in town, where to find the sophisticated drug dealers, how to taste the new drugs, the best tailor with unique designs, the new hair stylist who has styles very different from normal ones, the best make-up artists, the most chic clubs, the new partners and so on and so on with their own beliefs. These teachers at the new gate were also never trained to use any specific philosophy, approach, pedagogy, methods, techniques and teaching materials to help the newcomers enter a proper, sober, and decorous new life-style.

Similar sudden changes also happen with the new generation on the block, namely the children especially teenagers of new politicians (mostly those with poor education or whose parents are poorly educated), when they are suddenly elevated to high profile ranks in our society, and enter the new "high" society in town. These children may now overact at their schools, or during play or gatherings with their peers. They may overact verbally and act differently than before. If a girl, she may use more make-up than usual and dress brazenly. When a young person enters a new culture and is unable to quickly adjust to it culturally, morally, religiously and customarily, this young person could either over-react or could became very passive and withdrawn from their group, exhibiting very low esteem and confidence (Oberg, 2006). Therefore, many educators now believe that there should be a new form of education for those who may move up from a lower level of society to a new high level in society, even amongst those who are highly educated themselves.

A former senior diplomat from Malaysia told me that prior to being posted to be a diplomat to a Western nation; he had to go through an intensive training course in

Kuala Lumpur to make him fit to carry out his new role as a diplomat. He was trained how to dance, how to stand in front of the officials of other countries, how to bow, how to start conversations and how to end them, how to address the top of the top and also the low, even how to address the royal family and their members, and all kinds of training which was given intensively. The training was not only given to him but also to his wife. His wife must also adjust herself to her husband's new role and environment in the diplomatic world (personal interview with Noor Shah Saad on November 1, 2015). He suggested that I read a guidebook provided to him during his special training in Kuala Lumpur and also another book related to the tasks of diplomacy (see Barston, 2006; Kennan, 1985).

There are schools in many countries that prepare people to begin a new life style as a diplomat. Such schools that teach how to live according to the lifestyle of a new country were introduced by the French and other leading European nations when countries started to exchange their diplomats and missions in the 16th century. Diplomacy means the arts and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of states at the stage of international relations (Cunningham, 2005). A former European ambassador who was assigned to be a diplomat to Indonesia told me how he was sent to Yogyakarta for intensive training, prior to starting his post. He was given intensive personalized training in:

- Bahasa Indonesia,
- the many different cultures of Indonesia,
- do's and don'ts,
- cultural no-nos,
- the customary roles of men and women in Indonesia,
- the layers of society amongst the Javanese as the majority culture,
- the layers of society in other major cultures of Indonesia,
- Indonesian cultural groups and their uniqueness,
- how to bow and use your hands with men and with women,
- holidays for all religions in Indonesia,
- and many other aspects of life in Indonesia like the traditional foods, fruits, etc.

If an already well educated diplomat needs to be prepared for living a new life-style in Indonesia with such well-prepared intensive training lasting for hundreds of hours, why cannot our new celebrities and our newly rich and famous be prepared in the same way? If many of our new young celebrities are not behaving well religiously, morally and culturally, who are to be blamed, the government or the educators? The public processes for simultaneously electing new members of parliament in the provinces of Indonesia were held recently, and many of the candidates who were elected were not highly educated as can be seen from the lists that have appeared in the local and national newspapers. Many have campaigned with funds from colleagues, friends and business people, and some, may even have needed support for their daily living expenses.

Once they are elected, they will be well paid, maybe 100 times more than they ever earned before. If they do not have a solid *iman* as many *ulama* (Islamic scholars) have said, they may soon behave immorally and overact in dressing, in speaking and in acting and may also start to misbehave culturally. This has happened after previous public elections where the persons elected did not do much for the people who elected them but only helped themselves and their support group. An Indonesian member of parliament only needs to have completed a high school equivalent education. Their

duties are to conduct assessments and to seek out and prepare inputs for making new laws; however, as lawmakers, they end up living with luxury that they do not know how to adjust to. This happens not only to these new members but also to their wives, their children and their kinfolk.

Teaching new comers how to enter a new life-style means that we train them to use their new facilities properly and, more importantly, how to properly behave and enjoy their new status: their new life with a new life-style. There are many OKB (*Orang Kaya Baru* or newly rich people) around us, in particular it is the children of these OKB, the newly wealthy men and the new politicians, who have misbehaved doing strange and improper things in their daily lives; some have even abused the position of their parents and some have used their status for criminal acts (refer Strauss-Kahn, 2011). They probably were not given proper preparation or re-educated as they should have been. We may need to create a new department or study program at our campus to cater for these needs.

3. PREPARE OUR SOCIETY

Siti Nurhaliza, a famous Malaysian singer, is viewed by many as a singer who was able to enter her new lifestyle well. Most people, that I have met, have said that she was able to enter without problems by following the tenets of her faith in dressing, in talking, and in behaving in public. For many Malaysians, Indonesians and Bruneians, she was an idol prior to becoming a public figure. Now she is even more popular after being invited to sing at the Royal Albert Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra in 2005, a rare chance and opportunity for only a select few, especially so for a celebrity from Asia (Wo, 2005).

Many of the rich and the famous living in modern, industrialized countries have to spend millions of dollars to cure diseases that they never intended or wanted to have but are a result of their new profligate lifestyles. Some go on drugs, more on alcohol and many behave brutally to themselves and those close to them, their wives, their husbands, their children and even their environment. There was a series of TV weekly show called "The Rich and Famous" and the audiences were shown the addictions of their life styles and how those addictions played out in public life, but the show did not try to guide the public on ways to avoid the mistakes that the rich and famous had gone through. The program wanted the public to absorb their shows and digest them personally. But…how many of us can digest them properly? The facts are that many will imitate these profligate examples which could destroy their own lives. There are also similar programs in Indonesia, such as *"Insert", "Silet", "Cek and Ricek"*, amongst others, which portray the glamorous sides and sometimes the unglamorous sides of the lives of celebrities with their box office successes.

There are no "gate keepers" who will guide the newcomers when entering their new life style but, in all countries of the world, there are highly paid consultants around when the newcomers enter the "wrong" ways in their new life-styles. We can Google and easily find lists of consultants, therapists, lawyers, clinics and many others available to serve the rich and famous in our modern industrialized nations and even in our new modern, high-income societies in developing countries. In the USA, there are the Riordan Clinic, the New Haven, and Rainmaker Thinking and many others in other countries. As many of the Asian countries proceed to industrialize and even become

service societies and high-income nations in the near future, how can we make ready for the changes and prepare ourselves with the new life styles? Whether we like it or not, this is where we are going and where we have to create our new life-styles in the future.

There are colleges in Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Manila, Singapore and other big cities in the world that utilize the modern life styles to cater to the needs of the children of the rich and famous and of the staff in multinational companies. These children do not go to schools in small towns, far away from high-end entertainment, and far away from the latest modern life-style. Their campuses are located in, or close to modern malls, with expensive modern premises in exclusive environments in the upper class hearts of modern cities.

These teenagers or young adults do not socialize in village coffee shops, but at Starbucks, San Francisco Coffee and other elite cafés. They do not stay in dorms, 3m x 3m with bunks for 2 to 4 students; they stay in luxury apartments with indoor swimming pools and other entertainment facilities. The founders of these colleges prepare the students to cater for the needs of international and multinational companies and some also teach their students that there are also life styles of the regular and normal people in societies which are different from the life styles that they are in now. Of course, we do hope that they succeed, because we need these graduates to be able to adjust their lives for both, the "exclusive" society and for the "normal" society, as the normal one is the majority in any nation. However, if they are always taught in a luxury environment and are never faced with the normal education system and normal life-styles, another problem arises. If our country is led by graduates such as them, who did not go through a normal education system or experience a normal life-style, how can they hope to lead the majority in our country in the future?

4. CONCLUSIONS

Public communities should be made aware of these phenomena and be ready to face any circumstances in the future. Those from the rich and the wealthy elite should be made aware that living the life style of the rich and the famous is not wrong, but their children should be taught and given experiences on how to live a normal way of life. Those who prepare accommodation for the teenage students of the wealthy and famous around their campuses should also provide proper guidance and counseling on how to live normally by providing special lectures and classes to the dwellers of their exclusive apartments. Special classes and internships should be designed to not only think of profits at the end of the month. Bringing these students to remote villages where the poor and the disadvantaged live may help them understand that there are millions of people who are not as lucky as they are, these underprivileged people do their best to make pitifully small household budgets go around. Having a short internship within such a community will help them understand the real lives of the majority in their own country.

If the education parlors are at the "mall", designed with special curricula that develop awareness among these children of the rich and the famous with the real life situation in the country where they live, they should be made aware that the wealth that they now enjoy as a result of the achievements of their parents was also contributed by the hands and the sweat of the poor from their country. The curricula could be in the

form of one or more subjects, field trips, internships and other forms of social interaction between them as the "wealthy and famous" and the poor and the disadvantaged. It may also be in the form of projects that are funded by their parents or their parents' companies; the most important thing is that, these students with their own mega lifestyles become aware of the reality that surrounds them.

If there are new celebrities that are entering the new life style of the wealthy within our society, train them with similar programs. Make them aware of the nature of social interaction that will develop their sense of humanity. Show them examples of famous celebrities who care for other people, for nature and the environment, such as Angelina Jolie, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Amir Khan and many others who have been contributing to help others in education, health, eliminating poverty, creating better sustainable environments and improved societies .

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