

# RE-INVENTING BUDDHIST EDUCATION VALUES AND CURRENT GLOBAL AWARENESS AS EDUCATORS' SELF-DIRECTED INSIGHTS TOWARDS PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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by Edi Ramawijaya Putra\*

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses Buddhism-based values and current global awareness that can be used as self-directed insights for today's educators practices. This step is hypothetically significant to be emerged and tailored in a daily pedagogical implementation as grass-root implementer of the national education policy adopted by every countries. Educators and their learners are the small miniature of the global representation which covers differences, variety of identities, cultural diversities as well as religious ideology. For this purpose, in-depth descriptive exploration is used to review and discuss the related issues, findings, and current perspectives toward the theme. Reinvention of the Buddhist values of education does not mean to create a particular system or structure but rather making the contextual and engaged Buddhism towards to classroom pedagogical approach. This paper reviews some best-practices from researcher to implement buddhist foundations as regular basis within a secular, mainstream curriculum. This paper also suggests the global awareness and buddhist educaton values would enhance the output of today's learners who become the next future generation.*

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\*. Sriwijaya State Buddhist College of Tangerang , Banten, Indonesia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious education plays a significant role in sustaining world's harmony and peace. Peace is a foundation of development in every aspects of life in every countries. Without peace and harmony, it would be difficult to raise any efforts to make human being meet their worldly goals. Buddhist education has long been recognized as integral part of system of ethics and philosophy of educational thoughts. With the emerging of today's worldwide connection and linkage among nations, Buddhist education has been well-known as a vital element adopted in a pedagogical system.

It is easy to find schools or educational institutions implement Buddhist approaches as their key-construct to establish more valuable education for people. Mindfulness, for instance, a long-lost item of notable bricks to build human character is cultivating its peak as basic element of today's education. Character becomes the major objectives of every countries that wanted to form better generation in the future. This phenomenon happens due to the lack of humanity amid to the rapid development of technological and sciences.

Moreover, in modern education context, Buddhist education has been flourish grown in many educational levels ranging from elementary to tertiary education. Buddhist education has become a discipline that attracts many scholars, practitioners' researchers and thinkers to deal with. Buddhist Education had been crossed and expanded up to Sri Lanka, China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodian, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia with the rise and development of Buddhism in those countries qualitatively and quantitatively. In those countries Buddhist Education has made tremendous progress with the inclusion of modern subjects in the syllabus adopted as one of framework of national curriculum.

Indeed, what do these all mean without teachers? Teachers take a very great role in determining the attainment of ultimate goals of Buddhist education. Teachers can be the one who transfer the knowledge, or the one who become the role model in which learners and disciple reflect and interact with. For this reason, it is

radically important for teachers to have positive views and clear understanding about their intentions and motivations of being an educators. Sometimes, educators do not know whether their intentions are already tailored with learners' interpretation. Or, the mismatches might occurs due to the lack of insights of what religious education (in this case, Buddhist education) is important.

Many of ways can be undertaken by religious educators to reformulate their pedagogic effort in order to provide better education guidance for learners. Yet, the thesis statement offered in this paper is twofold (1) by reinventing Buddhist education and (2) by revitalizing global awareness.

## 2. RATIONAL

Our today's world seems to have similar problems in terms of the preservation of the existence under humanity agenda. Innovation, technological invention as well as human resources development have been sophisticatedly developed for the sake of better, easier and more efficient livelihood. However, such noble and normative efforts would face many global challenges and constraints which currently affect greatly towards world harmony and peace. More importantly, at stake, those challenges and constraints would soon take the world existence into the era of competitiveness among national ideologies, powers, environments, spaces, resources and so forth. Ironically, the term "competitiveness" as a key-concept to sustain mutual and global relationship has been largely misunderstood in a highly pejorative voices without any thoughtful mechanism to resolve it. As the result, this phenomenon may be represented in many crimes committed on the scale of trans-continental, trans-nation and trans-citizenship. This is no longer can be solely a nation-based problem but rather deeply-seated in a being that belongs to particular nation or state.

Buddhism views the misconceptions and the wholesomeness are deeply-seated in a mind that long have been possessed by delusions, anger, and greediness. Presumably, huge dichotomies have been raised to separate the term secular education and religious/spiritual education. There has been small number of efforts to bring the issues of international into the hidden curriculum system. In

respect to the emergence of reflective and contemplative wisdom in Buddhism which sees human as potential motivation to transform them, therefore education has a literally substantial role in this sphere. In line with this claim, Venerable Thich Tri Quang (2014) in a foreword of volume “The Importance of Promoting Buddhist Education” said that Buddhist education should be aligned with educational setting by optimizing mindfulness, transcend duality, compassion and contemplative mind as a breakthrough of new pedagogy perspectives. Next, to what extent those values aligned with formal education tradition is still in a big question mark.

For example, strong voices come from Hicks (2007) who clarified the concept of “international” in our today’s educational curriculum. The internationally-approach based does not refer to international knowledge in cognitive repertoire. It deals with interdependence principles which present the internationalships as humanity values on living co-existence, existing between people, issues and events in the world today. Heine and Prebish (2003) acknowledged the changes of monastic, textual, social tradition as the impacts of modernization as response to the industrial revolution, global movements and other international factors.

In most countries in Asia like Indonesia, Phillipines, Malay, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam Buddhism is introduced through formal education setting. The insertion of Buddhsim as one content of the curriculum has been adopted long time ago due to the needs of making the values of Lord Buddha’s teaching aligns with the pedagogic efforts at school level. There has been variety of methods and strategies made by the policy makers and authorities to impart the compassions and wisdom of Buddhism for the younger generation. This notion “*pedagogising Buddhsim*”, however, face numerous of challenges in its practices. The scope and escalation of problems and difficulties vary from nations to nations due to their own political, economic, cultural and environmental situations. Thus, lessons and practices from particular state or nation to another would be unequal compared to the efforts of making Buddhism an integrated parts of national education policy.

Ironically, the rise of violence and extremisms across nations were largely caused by the radicalism that resorts in the awoken of

religious awareness among people. In Buddhism context, rage of the conflicts in Rakhine State in Myanmar can be one of the most widespread religious issue involving Buddhist into the surface. In fact, this incidence has brought some implications toward Buddhist community regardless to the truth behind the long painstaking history of citizenship across afflicted areas where thousands of Rohingya lives.

In regarding to nation-based conflicts, despite this tension between theory and practice, Buddhism has been a major influence on the educational systems of many places, especially India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Tibet. From around the fifth century onward, Buddhist monasteries emerged as centers of education, not just for monks but also for laymen. Several monasteries became so large and complex that they are considered prototypes of today's universities. In India, the most famous of these educational centers – Nalanda, in what is now Bihar state– is said to have had 10,000 students from many different countries, and offered courses in what then constituted philosophy, politics, economics, law, agriculture, astronomy, medicine and literature. This is a historical evidence of Buddhist education could be the key concept of integrating aspects of livelihood as resources of interests.

Specific lesson-learned. In Thailand, monastic schools located in Buddhist temples were the main source of education for male children for many centuries, though they offered primarily religious education. When the Thai government introduced Western-style, secular education around the beginning of the 20th century, it used monastic schools as the vehicle for reaching the wider population. As of the 1970s, “almost 50 per cent of Thailand’s primary schools are still situated in Buddhist monasteries. Similarly, in Japan the Buddhist monastic education tradition was so influential that one 19th-century scholar of Japan wrote that “Buddhism was the teacher under whose instruction the nation grew up.”

Needless to say, due to the rapid progress of adaption of Buddhist education as values in today's modern education practices, the importance of self-directed teachers to upgrade their understanding, knowledge as well as pedagogical-content skills in order to present a contextual and meaningful instruction.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Throughout this paper, the discussion will focus on elaborating the issues and challenges of our today's Buddhist education and how it shapes the way religious education is going to be adapted in the classroom contexts.

As has been mentioned earlier, variety of ways had been adopted and implemented by countries to impart the values of Buddhist education. Buddhist countries with large number of Buddhist believers like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos have been successfully manage their Buddhist education systematically through policy-making procedures. The types of education ranging from laities, monasticism, secular, formal, non-formal and other aspects and forms that representing Buddhism as the core of values. For several countries with minority of Buddhist believers such as Malay, Singapore, Indonesia and Japan the types could be different according to its context of political and educational policies. Basically, there have been expanding movements allocating Buddhism as continual load along with the national system that works in every nations.

Notwithstanding, such movements emerged as a response of achieving the similar objectives. Social welfare, prosperity, equalities in livelihood, index of happiness are the main reason of why Buddhist approach as segmented above presents a solution toward the current humanity problem. One of the objective stated in the legal document of UN in MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). This documents state the objectives that must be addressed by every religious community in the world. Venerable Thich Nhat Tu in the volume proceeding "Promoting Buddhist Education" wrote that the contributions of Buddhist approaches are the key-constructs of social responses due to the social and individual transformation. Buddhist intervention in the education sphere is inevitably conceded as a main contributory role to enhance moral foundation in every countries (Nhat Tu, 2014).

I personally enchanted seeing the tagline of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) displayed in its website. It was written "Building peace in the minds

of men and women”. This is a call of all Buddhist stakeholders to re-orienting their views and insights. The rising of education and the values of Buddhism segmented in academic realm with variety of forms and patterns have been linked to the needs of preserving the relevance to overcome our global problems. This pride, however, permeate a question, is this the ideal shape of Buddhist education we expected? Or it is only the grounded type depending to its context?. A case of Christianity religious education in United Kingdom has informed us how religious education must be associated with the current trends and issues and other surrounding aspects. As stated in Guardian.com, the religious aspects of the educational system in UK can't be abolished; but they need to be brought in line with contemporary realities. Christianity is now only the largest among many contending religions or life stances; among schoolchildren ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)).

Unfortunately, such noble missions would be impossible to achieve without well-intervention of religious teachers who become the center of education. In the curricular perspective, religious teachers in a grass-root implementer of all policy made by the authorities and stakeholders. The role of teachers now are very important and vital to successful Buddhist education in pedagogic level. Therefore, every teachers (Buddhist religious teachers) must be aware of the current issues and how the content of their pedagogic moves can resolve the problems. Learners are young learners who will be taking part soon as citizen of the world. Teachers' self-directed awareness is very essential to create positive and constructive learning atmosphere of religious education in this context.

Our world needs educators who are sensitive to see the current global trends and issues related to the self-transformation and cultivation of wisdom. Methods and strategies of teaching beyond regularities of curriculum-driven hegemony. In other words, religious education should be based on the real needs and real challenges of what actually happens around the world. The output is expected to be a part of world identity to solve the humanity problem. Buddhist education, then can be said as the “awakening” of the Buddha role-modelled to his disciples and followers not only

the challenging goal of individual cultivation but also the active integration of Buddhist values, principles and knowledge into daily individual and community social living (Hin, 2003).

In a broader sense, basic Buddhist principles are not only relevant to the Buddhist world; in as much they can be communicated in secular and humanitarian terms they can be of use to the wider world where there is so much moral uncertainty in education. As in so much else, example is the best means to encourage others. It is to be hoped that those countries with a long tradition of Buddhism will appreciate their great wealth, examine ways to enrich the education system with Buddhist principles, and prioritize education in terms of the resources at their disposal (Lokamitra, 1980).

#### 4. THE VALUES BUDDHIST EDUCATION

First of all, I feel obliged to state that the notion Buddhist education has been largely misunderstood or misinterpreted. The ultimate aims of Buddhist education is not to generate a system or discipline or any formal structure as a basis of implementation. Buddhist education, instead, aims at a personality transformation into a highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection. These three faculties of perfection of human life undoubtedly lead a man through mundane happiness which is the highest achievement we all are equally looking for. Therefore, the Buddhist education is grounded on the primary psychological need of all living beings (Rahula, 2015).

In the respects of emergence of inserting values in Buddhism as pedagogic contents, the number of Buddhist institutions established in many countries cultivate the values of Buddhist education as a process of educational regularities. Therefore, the goal of Buddhist education is to attain wisdom. Therefore, the Buddha's teachings are not a cold philosophy designed merely to rearrange the concepts in our minds; they are a living act of compassion intended to show us how to open our hearts to the miracle of awareness—our own awareness among the awareness of others through the same practice thinking and experience.

A good example to prove above mentioned claimed is a research conducted by Rhea in 2015. She investigated the impact



of Buddhism on teaching, exploring the educational philosophy and approach, the daily practice of teaching, and the challenge of bringing together the mainstream education curriculum with Buddhist worldview in the first school in Australia being guided by Buddhist philosophy. This study found the impact of Buddhism on teaching has been considerable through the development of a Buddhist-inclined school culture and in both pedagogical approach and in the development of curriculum materials. At an epistemological level, the teachers engage daily with mindfulness about the similarities and differences in Buddhist and non-Buddhist understandings of human behaviors (Rhea, 2015).

Another example comes from Indonesia. Several Buddhist higher education institutions run a mixed-implementation of monasticism and Buddhist education. Students were required to follow ordination during the period of learning pre-service education of becoming religious teachers in formal schools. It's called PTAB (Pendidikan Tinggi Keagamaan Buddha). Thus, Buddhism is an educational system aimed at regaining our own intrinsic nature. It also teaches absolute equality which stemmed from Buddha's recognition that all sentient beings possess this innate wisdom and nature. There is no inherent difference among beings.

In accordance with above example, Dong (2003) purposes a fundamental goal of the process—an end to be achieved. Functions are other outcomes that may occur as a natural result of the process— by products or consequences of schooling. For example, some teachers believe that the transmission of knowledge from school to the real world is something that happens naturally as a consequence of possessing that knowledge as function of education. Knowledge that comes from within is different from knowledge that comes from information. Learners are exposed to have their inner willingness to see the social phenomenon and react positively to it instead of being overrated with influx of information which never been the source of wisdom.

Therefore, it is the content of assessments that largely drives education. How is the capacity/ability to think creatively assessed in today's schools? To what extent is the typical student recognized and given respect? How often are students given the opportunity

to recognize and evaluate different points of view when multiple choice tests require a single 'correct' answer? Teachers who hold a more humanistic view of the purpose of education often experience stress because the meaning they assign to education differs greatly from the meaning assigned by society or their institution. It is clear in listening to the language of education that its primary focus is on knowledge and teaching rather than on the learner. Students are expected to conform to schools rather than schools serving the needs of students.

## 5. GLOBAL AWARENESS

The second main point of this paper is revitalizing global awareness. Today world's problems are no longer viewed as separate load belong to particular nations or group of nations. In facts, the basic of all problem lies in the existence of mankind and humanity. The waves of global difficulties must be treated as holistic factor of reinventing mutual co-existence, perseverance of peace, reasons of unity among people that lives on the same planet. Buddhist education should present their contribution amid the global crisis in many dimensions.

It is hard to say that the global problems are not about human being. United Nations on many of its publications mentioned that issues such as poverty, HIV, decolonization, security and peace, hunger, child mortality, gender, climate changes, refugees, and terrorism are the foremost halts to address that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

For the sake of arriving the wisdom of all, education and religion must work hand-in-hand to crack the compassion and loving-kindness to other. Hershock (2014) states that structural dynamics and resolving the predicaments being generated by traditional-conventional before, working across national and cultural boundaries, increased interdisciplinary among the humanities, natural, and social sciences is not merely astute, it is crucial. Educating for relational (rather than comparative) equity begins with resisting the temptation to reduce equity to access. Although "education for all" is a laudable goal, it is not a substitute for "educational quality for

all.” If equity is not taken to be a comparative measure of the “status” of individual persons, communities, or classes, but rather understood as a dynamic index of responsiveness, educating for equity involves generating the sensitivities and sensibilities needed to go from learning about each another to learning from and learning for one another.

This implies a shift of epistemic emphasis from facts (knowing-that) and skills (knowing-how) to ethically informed discernment (knowing-to). In short, educating for equity entails reimagining education as the progressive merging of knowledge with wisdom. The shifts of religious education is on the track of having “learning to live together” as one of objectives of UNESCO as body of UN to promote education. For Buddhism, as formal religion that adopted as curriculum content, Gamage (2016) put forwards several Implications of Buddhist thoughts for alternative education. He discussed in his paper clues for contemplative education based on self-awakening instead of the currently dominant education based on rational-empirical approach. Empathy arising from values such as compassion and loving kindness can not only reduce human suffering but also contribute positively to sustainable development and culturally sensitive, sustainable education. Furthermore, an alternative education can be formulated on values such as selflessness and non-attachment rather than attempting to protect and sustain constructed identities reducing the human suffering caused by identity conflicts and notions of threatened self.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Buddhist and Buddhism is one of the community that exists co-existence with other being and communities. Therefore, seeing at the global backdrops and changes are the most important elements to watch. In sum, partnership and collaborative works of authorities in every countries need to work hard to educate their religious teacher in ideal professional development. Because it is not enough to counter violent extremism that have been our world enemy. In facts, we need to prevent it, and this calls for forms of ‘soft power’, to prevent a threat driven by distorted interpretations of culture, hatred, and ignorance.

No one is born a violent extremist – they are made and fueled.

Disarming the process of radicalization must begin with human rights and the rule of law, with dialogue across all boundary lines, by empowering all young women and men, and by starting as early as possible, on the benches of schools. Buddhist education whereas the teachers are included with has a capacity to provide assistance to states as they craft sharper strategies to prevent violent extremism. Religious leaders and Sangha members has also committed to plan fighting and eradicating extremism with a focus on priorities of direct relevance to UNESCO's work: (i) education, skills development and employment facilitation; (ii) empowerment of youth; (iii) strategic communications, the Internet and social media; and (iv) gender equality and empowering women.

School itself is social-spiritual bio power that grows fast in our today's life. Lacks of tolerance or increases of ignorance are heavily relied on the capability of religious education to set human being whether to both directions. Buddhist education, is a part of modern world education has its crucial role in determining what world we have in the near future. The investment of human resources lied in the walls of schools where every verses and teachings of Lord Buddha are transferred in through the efforts and discourses made by religious teachers.

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