

Harmful Effects of Useless Knowledge

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Knowledge is the main fabric of everything in the universe. From the zillions of stars in the universe to the tiniest ultrastructure in our cells and atoms everything is governed by the knowledge. Of course, that reflects enormous knowledge of Allah ta'lah, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. To compare His knowledge to our knowledge is like comparing the vast oceans to a mini drop of water on the beak of a bird who dips his beak in the water.¹

Allah had bestowed ability and capacity in human being to acquire, retain and reproduce knowledge. Therefore, the very first revelation to the final divine book begins with "Read with the name of Thy Lord who created man from Alaq (Embryo) and read, thy Lord has shown great generosity Who taught man with pen and taught him what he knew not".² These verses were revealed to the man, the final messenger of Allah Muhammad ﷺ who never touched a physical pen as he was unlettered, not able to read or write, thus referring pen to broader context i.e., physical pen, pencil, chalk, camera, computers, molecules, DNA, and observations etc. The intellect given to man is also referred to as Sprit of the God, and after that inspiration everything is made to subject to human being with only exception of Iblis or Satan, who can't be conquered by knowledge alone.³ Rather, he was given power to insert ideas in the human mind, so there began the greatest test for human how to protect himself from devilish ideas and how to live to his full potential as Governor on Earth. Power came with great responsibility.

A very limited capacity of an individual human being to accumulate knowledge as compared to the entire mankind led to specialization and sub specialization. Everyone can't be everyone. Time, resources, energy are limited. Fortunately, "pen" is a big instrument. Enormous amount of knowledge is available in books, websites, You Tube, Search Engines so do we really require all this to burden our brain?⁴ In the first place we will never be able to do it, secondly more than essential knowledge may make us sick, depressed, frustrated, and confused so we may not be able to properly understand, let alone use it. The final messenger of Allah made prayer "O Allah, I seek refuge in Thee from the knowledge which does not benefit, from the heart that does not entertain the fear (of Allah), from the soul that does not feel contented

and the supplication that is not responded." (Sahih Muslim Hadith 6568).⁵

So, what's useless knowledge? Of course, a knowledge which will not be or can't be used is useless. A knowledge that harms rather than benefit a person or humanity is also useless knowledge. But the question arises, is observation of birds' and animals' behavior or tracking stars' orbits is useless? No, not at all. Allah wants us to observe, ponder and reflect. This will not only make us also to realize Allah's immense wisdom, knowledge, power, benevolence, caring and greatness but also apply Allah's principles of sciences to other areas and invent new things for benefit of mankind. Quran regards holders of useless knowledge as donkeys carrying big and heavy books on their backs which are no benefit to them.⁶

The knowledge which is not utilized is useless knowledge, knowledge that goes against the humanity and serves only the interests of evil forces or for exploitation of other human beings is useless and rather harmful use of knowledge.⁷ In the medical field lengthy, boring lectures of no practical use impart useless knowledge. Too much detailed descriptions of things at undergraduate level are useless knowledge. A knowledge that vanishes after passing examination and hardly ever come into practice in life is certainly a useless knowledge. Such useless knowledge exerts lot of pressure on students resulting in resentment, depression, frustration, confusion, unfulfillment feelings, anger, sedentary lifestyle, and even suicidal thoughts. The content needs to fit in the broad perspective of a meaningful life and Hereafter.

When Muslims under guidance of the final divine book Quran and the final messenger of Allah went after useful knowledge shunning useless knowledge and other useless activities a new dawn ushered in the form of Golden Age of Islam lasting about 1000 years, leading to big bang of sciences, laying foundations of modern sciences social sciences and humanity, the fruits of which are being enjoyed by everyone today.^{7,8,9}

Allah ta'lah after pointing to eight of His mighty creations emphasizes that "Truly he succeeds that purifies it (himself), and he fails that corrupts it".¹⁰

In conclusion, we, therefore, must purify our curriculum and eliminate all sorts of useless

knowledge decreasing the unnecessary burden, and replacing it with more purposeful and useful education. This will insha Allah, not only prevent us from harmful effects of useless knowledge but lead to rediscovered creativity among our students and scientists.

References

1. Quran: 31:27
2. Quran: 96: 1-5
3. Quran: 2:31-33
4. <https://ofpad.com/knowledge-is-power-knowledge-without-action-is-useless/>
5. <https://mogreen88.wordpress.com/2010/08/08/useless-knowledge/>
6. Quran: 62:5
7. <https://www.1001inventions.com>
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9. Quran 23:3
10. Quran 91:9-10