

Education in Islam: A Conceptual Framework

Mohd Altaf Bhat

*Ph.D Research scholar, Islamic studies
(Centre of Central Asian Studies, KU)*

ABSTRACT

Education advances the society in all its aspects; it helps in the creation of a just society and an accelerated development of the younger generation in intellectual, spiritual, cultural and aesthetic fields. So far as the Islamic perspective on education is concerned Islam placed education in high esteem. Since education occupies a significant position in Islamic civilization and makes it obligatory upon its adherents, regardless of gender, to learn and disseminate knowledge. The word Quran comes from the 'Qura' meaning to read. The holy Quran in its first revelation began with the verse "IQRA" (to read) is about education. It does not leave its followers in darkness in any aspect of life. It was Islam that at a period when the entire world was lost in ignorance and darkness; who stressed the importance of education for mankind, not as a special privilege of a particular class but as an essential and unavoidable need for each and every human being. Islam made it obligatory upon Muslims to acquire knowledge as a necessary condition to their being true believers in Allah and Islam. It is impressed upon that acquisition of knowledge is as great a duty of women as that of men. Franz Rosenthal writes that in Islam, the concept of knowledge enjoyed an importance unparalleled in other civilizations. The present study is humble attempt to study the importance of education in Islam through the conceptual framework in order to have clear and comprehensive understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Islam had a rich tradition of education, Islamic scholarship led the world for hundreds of years in virtually every known academic discipline, and there was a wide range of schools throughout the Islamic empire and the greatest Islamic universities predate western universities by several centuries.¹ Therefore knowledge in Islam is part of faith. It is obligatory for all Muslims to pursue knowledge and is obligatory for Muslim societies to cultivate the various branches of knowledge. It is for this reason that the various sciences ('*ulum*') were studied, developed and promoted by Muslims for centuries prior to the western enlightenment.² The classification of the sciences made by the learned Muslim scholars had usually divided knowledge into two kinds the *ulum al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) and *ulum al-aqliyah* (acquired knowledge or rational sciences). The first referred to the traditional or revealed knowledge this knowledge is devolved in man through revelation. The second

¹ J. Mark Halstead, "An Islamic Concept of Education," Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2004, p. 517

² Syed Farid Alatas, *Knowledge and Education in Islam, Secularism and Spirituality: Seeking integrated knowledge and success in madrasah education in Singapore*, Ed. Moor Abdul Rahman and Lai Ah Eng, Singapore Marshall Cavendish, 2006, p. 168

referred to the intellectual sciences, it is knowledge that arises from man's capacity for reason, sense perception and observation. In the Qur'an the word '*ilm*, knowledge, is used for both the sciences of nature and other kinds of sciences, and the study of nature is recommended for the sake of discovering the patterns of in the universe and to utilize them for the benefit of humanity.³ The fundamental aim of Islamic education is to provide children with positive guidance which help them to grow into good human beings who will lead happy and fruitful lives in this world and aspire to achieve the reward of the faithful in the world to come.⁴

II. VIEWS OF DIFFERENT SCHOLARS

The aim of education in Islam as specified in the First world Conference on Muslim Education held in Makah in (1977 C.E/1393 A.H) "Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training man's spirit, intellect, his rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should cater therefore for the growth of man in all aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim Education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large."⁵

Education in the context of Islam is regarded as a process that involves the complete person, including the rational, spiritual, and social dimensions. According to *Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, the comprehensive and integrated approach to education in Islam is directed toward the "balanced growth of the total personality...through training Man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses...such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality."⁶ In the educational theory of Islam knowledge is gained in order to actualize and perfect all dimensions of human being. In Islam the highest model of perfection is the prophet Muhammad (SAAW) and the goal of Islamic education is that people be able to live as He lived. *Syed Hossein Nasr* writes that despite the fact that education does train human kind for happiness in this life, "its ultimate goal is the abode of permanence and all education points to the permanent world of eternity."⁷ Again according to *Syed Hossein Nasr* "Islamic education had to be concerned with the whole being of men and women whom it sought to educate. Its goal is not only the training of the mind but that of the whole being of the person. It implied not only instruction or transmission of knowledge (*ta`lim*), but also training of the whole being of student (*tarbiyah*). The teacher is not only a *mu`allim* a 'transmitter of knowledge', but also a *murabbi*, a trainer

³ Mehdi Golshani, *Issues in Islam and Science*, Al-Mustafa International Translation and Publication Center, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran, 2015, pp 12-13

⁴ J. Mark Halstead, "An Islamic Concept of Education," Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2004, p. 523

⁵ Syed Sajjad Hussain and Syed Ali Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, Hodder and Stoughton, Jeddah, King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia, 1979, p. 44; also Ghulam Nabi Saqeb, "Some Reflections on Islamization of Education Since 1977 Makkah Conference: Accomplishments, Failures and Tasks Ahead", Intellectual Discourse, IIUM, Malaysia, Vol.8, No. 1, 2000, p. 47

⁶ Syed Muhammad Naquib al Attas, *Aims and objectives of Islamic Education*, Hodder and Stoughton, Jeddah, King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia, 1979, p. 158

⁷ Syed Hossein Nasr, "The Islamic Philosophers' Views on Education", Muslim Education Quarterly, 12, United Kingdom, 1984, p.7

of souls and personalities.”⁸ In Islam spiritual and temporal reality are two sides of the same sphere and to ascertain truth by reason alone restrictive. Many Muslim educationists believe that favouring reason at the expense of spirituality interferes with balanced growth. Acquiring knowledge in Islam is not intended as an end but as a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness, leading to faith and righteous action. Education in Islam trains the sensibility of an individual, in such a manner that their attitude towards life, their behaviour, decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islam. It prepares human beings for holistic life with no separation of this temporary life and life after death.⁹ In Islam knowledge was never divorced from the sacred and great care was taken to create an atmosphere in which the sacred quality of knowledge and the religious nature of all educational pursuits in the traditional context were confirmed rather than denied. The education and the science which developed in Islamic civilization over the centuries are fundamentally Islamic in character, whatsoever might have been their historical origin. The Islamic civilization digested various types of knowledge from different sources and countries and made to grow within the living body of Islam. The Islamic education and sciences are related in the most intimate manner to the principles of the Islamic revelation and the spirit of the Qur`an.¹⁰

III. EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF QURANIC VERSES

The holy Quran is full of exhortations to pursue knowledge, as Qur`an has frequently used the word *ilm* (knowledge), every action a Muslim performs, including education, is seen as an act of worship. Islamic education is different from other types of educational theory and practice largely because of the all encompassing influence of the Quran. The Quran serves as a comprehensive design for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. The revelation of the Quran in the 7th century proved quite revolutionary for the predominantly illiterate Arabian society. Arab society had enjoyed a rich oral tradition, but the Quran as the word of God and needed to be in nature interacted with by means of reading, writing, and reciting its words. Hence reading and writing for the purpose of accessing the full blessings of the Quran was an inspiration for the Muslims. Thus, education in Islam clearly derived its origins from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction.¹¹ Education is fundamentally important to Muslims. The immense incentive to learn is evident throughout the holy Quran and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad (SAAW), emphasizing that Allah’s commands can never be fully understood without knowledge and education. The Quran states: “O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge” (20:114) The Quran says that the superiority in God’s eyes is of those who have knowledge. Knowledge lifts from the clutches of ignorance to the heights of wisdom and understanding.

⁸ Syed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, KPI Limited, London and New York, 1987, p. 123

⁹ Roudlotul Firdous Binti Fatah Yasin and Dr. Mohd Shah Jani, “Islamic Education: The Philosophy, Aim, and Main Features,” *International Journal of Education and Research*, Vol.1, No. 10, Bangladesh, October 2013, pp 5-6

¹⁰ Syed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, KPI Limited, London and New York, 1987, pp 122-123

¹¹ <https://www.education.stateuniversity.com> (accessed on 4-3-2016)

The Quran highlights that “Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees; and Allah is aware of what you do.” (58:11). This verse clearly mentions that those who have been given knowledge and those who believe in Allah will be raised in ranks. The Quran also states “Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only men of understanding are mindful.” (39:9). In this verse the Quran makes it clear that those who possess knowledge and those who do not possess are not equal. Thus Holy Quran grants high ranks to those who obtain knowledge and if a human being wants to rise, he has to attain knowledge.

The Quran also emphasizes wisdom and guidance rather than the blind acceptance of tradition by saying that “When it is said to them: follow what God hath revealed they say: Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers. What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance” (2:170)

Besides there are many traditions of prophet (SAAW) which highlights of importance of education, It was narrated that *Anas bin Malik* (R.A) said. The messenger of Allah said. “Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim”¹²

Abu Huraira Reported that the prophet (SAAW) said “One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to paradise made easy by God.”¹³

The prophet (SAAW) said “Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the cause of God”¹⁴

The prophet (SAAW) also said “God, His angles and all those in heavens and on earth, even ants in their hills and fish in the water, call down blessings on those who instruct others in beneficial knowledge”¹⁵

The prophet (SAAW) said “When a man dies, all his deeds came to an end except for three, an ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge or a righteous child who will pray for him.”¹⁶

IV.CONCLUSION

Islam encourages Muslims to learn and emphasis over education which to the classical and neo classical scholars is corner stone of all round development of an individual and to the country as well. It stresses over the uniform progress of materialistic and religious life. It enlightens the souls, dispels the ignorance, enriches the mind, produces excellences in intellect, saves men from omissions and excesses, cures passions and impulses of their waywardness and solidifies faith and belief in revealed word of God. Knowledge is the architect of the morality, and custodian of values and ideals which are the major determinants of human destiny both here and hereafter. In Islam knowledge is not the monopoly of the learned few. Every Muslim according to his needs and means is under the religious obligation to accept learning as a continuous process in his life. The Quran has emphasized at several places for ilm (knowledge), research, and investigation and human being has been invited to consider over the creation of the moon, the sun, stars, the earth and the heaven and change of seasons and to discover the secrets of nature.

¹² Ibn Majeh, Hadith No. 224, classified as sahih by Albani

¹³ Ibid Hadith No.225,

¹⁴ Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 108

¹⁵ ibid, Hadith No. 422

¹⁶ Sahih Muslim