

## Islamization of the Discipline of Education

*By Ishaq Farhan*

### I. *The Concept of the Discipline of Education*

- A. Fields of knowledge are diversified, and touch upon almost every aspect of life and the universe, including the physical, societal, spiritual and material aspects. Various theories of knowledge are proposed by man to deal with its classification, acquisition and use in life situations. The discipline of education deals with the question of teaching and learning of various disciplines of knowledge by teachers and students with the hope of changing the behavior of the learner to adapt to society and develop the capabilities necessary to become an effective human being.

Education, then, is an applied discipline of knowledge which is a composite of other social and humanistic disciplines. It concerns itself with changing the behavior of the learner, in terms of information, skills and attitudes. Education guides human beings in a certain direction delineated by the values of the society or a certain ideology using know-how, methods, and technologies of teaching compatible with their nature and style of learning.

Education, then, is both a process and a result of a process. The results or objectives of education reflect the dimensional value system of the society, and thus education is never a neutral discipline. Education cannot be neutral since it produces an individual with a personality that represents the value system of the society and its ideology in life. The content of the educational discipline depends on its interaction with other social and humanistic disciplines which are also partly value oriented and partly experimentally oriented. The process of education or the know-how, including use of methods,

strategies, and materials for the teaching-learning process, depends on the general nature of the human being providing it with an international aspect and experimental dimension.

Thus, the general educational theory would include and is a result of many educational sub-theories such as learning, teaching, curriculum, evaluation, and educational administration theories.

- B. Islam, however, looks upon *education as a form of worship*, and considers it a prerequisite obligation and responsibility for the individual, the society, and the state to be able to understand other Islamic obligations, carry *amanah* (trust), and be a *khalifah* (viceregent) of Allah on this earth. The word "read" is the first word revealed in the Qur'an, and the name Qur'an is the state of reading and being literate. Education is the process by which Islam inculcates knowledge in individuals and knowledge is at the apex of the value system of Islam. The importance of education in Islam is so paramount and great that it need not be emphasized here.

The unique characteristic of education in Islam, which cuts across all fields of knowledge, is that every Muslim scholar, in any field of knowledge, is considered an educator or a teacher. This is because every Muslim who knows even as little as one *ayah* (verse of Qur'an) is supposed to convey it and teach it to other Muslims, and not covet it.

In this way, every Muslim becomes both a learner and a teacher. Every *faqih* (specialist) in any other discipline has to spend some time teaching *fiqh* (science or knowledge) to other Muslims, whether formally, in schools, or informally, in the family, in mosques, or other societal settings. This very fact imposes great difficulties in tracing the history, and elements of the educational process, tradition and practices of Islamic education in the Islamic heritage.

Since Islamic education deals with all fields of knowledge, its Islamization at the present time is, to a great extent, dependent upon the Islamization of other fields of knowledge. This is not to imply that the process of its Islamization should be postponed. On the contrary, work should begin as soon as possible to facilitate the process of Islamization of other disciplines. This process, however, cannot be completed until

further steps of Islamization are adopted in those related disciplines.

## II. *The State of the Discipline of Education and Some of its Major Problems*

### A. *The Dilemmas of Western Education*

1. *The First Dilemma* encountered in Western education was its dependence on various contradictory philosophies of education, from ancient Greek philosophies to Renaissance and modern-era hazy, secular and materialistic philosophies. Philosophy of education is supposed to help formulate goals and ideas of the best personality needed for society. A concrete philosophy has not been formed and instead, this chaotic state of contradictory philosophies produced different systems of education without reaching the ultimate goals of education. Most goals of Western education are worldly, utilitarian, and pragmatic rather than humanely oriented.
2. *The Second Related Dilemma of Western* education is the weakness of the value-system orientation in the process of education. Some voices are becoming stronger which favor letting education become a totally experimental science which is value free or neutral. This trend has affected real progress in the essence of the discipline of education and the experimental dimension has been emphasized to exceed its boundary limits. This has resulted in individuals who are value indifferent.
3. *From this follows*, that, in general, Western education has stressed the development of all faculties of the individual, *except the spiritual dimension of his personality* which comprises *the third dilemma*. It tries to be consistent with secular philosophies of life providing secular education to the individual resulting in harm and injustice to his personality. This approach produces a materialistic personality in the individual who looks at religion and spiritual needs as private and not basic to human life on this earth.

Of course, this approach is couched in a Western context that rests on a known history of struggle between religion on one hand and science and life on the other hand.

4. *The Fourth Dilemma* of Western education is the excessive use of experimental and statistical approaches to the problems of education. It is understood that education has a value dimension related to how the individual learns, the more effective teaching strategies and methods, and the use of a large host of educational materials and technological teaching media. Experimental methodology has been excessively applied to many educational problems at the expense of the progress of the value-dimension side. This has resulted in a state of imbalance which has distorted many educational generalizations.
5. *The Fifth Dilemma* in Western education is the fact that education has been very exploited to serve the needs of economic development looking at education merely as an economic investment. This has resulted in an imbalanced curricula and in the absence of many general and liberal education courses needed for the development of well-rounded and integrated personalities and individuals.
6. *The Sixth Dilemma* in Western education lies in the absence of the teacher as exemplar in education and in character. The teacher should represent the personality of the scholar *and* the accepted social-behavioral model of the teacher. There is a great dichotomy in the personality of the Western teacher between the scholastic activities and his private and social life. The Western teacher is a propagator of knowledge, rather than an educator who is responsible for developing the values and the character of his students.

#### B. *The Dilemmas of Islamic Education*

1. Islamic education flourished throughout the early centuries of Islamic civilization as was the case with progress in the disciplines such as various Islamic political, social sciences, and law. Since the door of *ijtihad* was closed a few centuries ago, however, and the waves of colonialism and imperialism spread over the Islamic world, the state of Islamic education deteriorated. The result was that Westernization ensued and the effects of Western education and Western civilization in general were paramount depriving Muslims of their identity in education. Therefore, any Islamic revival should include, first, the process of de-Westernization, followed by the process

of Islamization of knowledge in general and education in particular.

2. *The Dilemma of Islamic Education* is manifold; some of its important aspects are:
  - a. *First, the duality of education in the Muslim educational system* and Muslim university education. There is the traditional Islamic curriculum which was kept unchanged and not responsive to modern needs, and the secular Western modern curriculum which influences Muslim minds in the direction of de-Islamization.
  - b. *Second, the Muslim teachers at all levels, including universities, are Westernized*, in most cases, and teach generations of youth Western ways. In fact, Muslim educators are fulfilling Western aims in the education of students but with our money. As the International Institute of Islamic Thought book on the Islamization of Knowledge\* puts it, "Teachers in Muslim world universities are not driven by its vision of Islam and are not driven by its cause (This) is certainly the greatest calamity of Muslim education." (P. 8).
  - c. *Third, Muslim education in recent times lacks an educational outlook, theories regarding modern educational problems of the Islamic Ummah, Educational Textbooks, and Teaching Materials suitable for Islamic education at all levels of Education.*
  - d. *Fourth, the Islamic education which is taught to our graduate students in Western universities is superficial*, because it is taught within the Western context, and by Western professors who do not have the Islamic vision, zeal, or Islamic moral system necessary for teaching Islamic education. Our Muslim universities should take this responsibility and break the vicious circle with regard to preparing Muslim educators.

### III. *The Need for the Islamization of the Discipline of Education*

If the present state of affairs continues there is a danger of losing our identity, de-Islamizing our generations, and never being united and creative as an Islamic Ummah. Although a comprehensive Islamic program for Islamization of all walks

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\**The Islamization of Knowledge*, (Herndon, VA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989) 126 pp.

of life is needed, the Islamization of knowledge in general and the Islamization of education in particular has first priority for the following reasons:

- A. If we need to preserve our Islamic identity from disintegration, and be proud of our cultural heritage, then Islamic education which stems from Islamic values and rests upon the universalities of our Islamic culture is needed, to perform this function.
- B. Education is the process by which a nation builds the personalities of its youngsters and future generations. So, if an Islamic future for the Ummah is sought, then an Islamic education is needed.
- C. Our present Westernized generations are sterile and non-creative, in the field of Western civilization, because they have neither been educated as Westerners nor as devout Muslims. As a matter of fact, to be creative and productive, an individual should be educated in the context of his culture and along the lines of his value system.

So for Muslims to be creative again, and contribute towards Islamization of the life of the Muslim Ummah and the world's civilization, they ought to be educated according to the Islamic system of education.

#### IV. *A Suggested Approach to Islamization of the Discipline of Education in Modern Times*

##### A. *Priorities*

1. *The Islamization of Muslim teachers and educators.* The role of the teacher in the Islamic system of education cannot be over-emphasized. It is very vital and critical, and we think it should be given the first priority in the Islamization process of education.

The optimum program of preparation would consist of a general program in *shari'ah* studies (Qur'an, Sunnah, Fiqh and Usul Al-Fiqh), Islamic Civilization and cultural heritage, specially designed courses in Islamic Education (various topics), and comparative modern educational issues and systems in the light of Islam.

2. *Islamization of University Educational Courses.* The process of Islamization of the discipline of education is often faced with the fact that not many courses of education Islamically designed are found available at the university level for Muslim professors of education to teach.

General courses of education as well as private and special courses dealing with special topics and themes of education should be made available in an Islamic context at the university level, for Muslim teachers, and for students to learn and teach. Examples of general courses are: Introduction to Islamic Education, History of Islamic Education, Foundations of Islamic Education, etc. . . .

Examples of special courses are: Curriculum Development in the Islamic Context, Educational Guidance in Islam, Muslim Child's Educational Needs, Educational Administration in Islam, etc. . . .

3. *Islamization of the general curriculum of education for students in the general system of education (Elementary and Secondary).*

This process is necessary, because these students constitute the bulk of our youth, and the graduates of this system who pursue their university education will catch the spirit and vision of Islamization at the university level.

4. *A Fourth priority is the Islamization of curricula for Islamic minorities to the practical possible extent.*

This is important to keep the feeling of one Islamic Ummah, and the results of this process will enrich the Islamization process of the discipline particularly with regard to special topics related to the education of Muslim minorities. This is, after all, an Islamic responsibility.

#### B. *The Features of a Practical Programme*

The main features of such a program are envisaged as follows:

1. Emphasis on the two major sources of Islamic education, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as sources of authentic *revealed* educational knowledge, outlining the general guidelines of the educational process in its serene Islamic context.

2. Analysis of the Islamic educational cultural heritage, with the purpose of using it functionally. It is to be noted here that the ideas of various Muslim educators are not sacred and some of their ideas and theories could be adopted, while others could be neglected.
  3. *Survey of Contemporary Muslim Educational Problems* and basic international educational problems that affect humanity at large.
  4. A theoretical analysis and practical experimentation for modern solutions to educational issues and problems in an Islamic context (individual research papers, institutional research projects, results of seminars, conferences and dissertations).
  5. Building up various Islamic Educational Models at all levels of education and evaluating them (general cycles of education, university education, curriculum, guidance, educational administration, etc. . . .).
  6. Preparing textbooks and educational materials and media from an Islamic point of view at all levels.
  7. Training of the needed personnel to fulfil any feature or part of the programme in an Islamic manner.
- V. *Strategies, Methods, and Organization of Islamizing the Discipline of Education*

Dealing with these aspects of Islamization, it can be looked upon through the axis of time, namely: The attitude towards the achievements of the past (The educational Islamic cultural heritage); Dealing with the activities of the present (the state of affairs of Islamic Education); Its Islamization projects for the future; and a fourth miscellaneous category of problems.

- A. *The Past Dimension*: The attitude towards the educational Islamic cultural heritage:
1. *Survey of the Qur'an* for all indicative *Ayahs* (Verses of the Qur'an) that have educative connotations. Then classify on a newly designed comprehensive hierarchical scale of key concepts and basic modern terminology which is consistent with, or not in contradiction with, Islamic basic ideals and values.

This strategy will help teachers, textbook writers, and researchers, to rely on the first basic source of educational science, for both authentic information, and further human endeavors of interpretation and classification.

An integration between revealed knowledge in education and human reasoning is thus smoothly established for Muslim educators.

2. *Survey of the Sunnah* (Prophet's Hadith) (ŞAAS) as done in the previous step, Sunnah comprises the second basic source for authentic revealed knowledge in the discipline of education. This is the second basic strategy in Islamization of the discipline of Education.
3. *Survey of the ideas and theories of traditional Muslim educators through all centuries* of Islamic history.

Careful analysis should be done and functional use of some ideas and writings after adaptation to modern situations could be beneficial. A compilation of the data collected in this step would result in encyclopedic works classifying the history of Islamic education in meaningful ways.

Such attempts have been started and some works have been published in this regard in the eighties.

4. *Survey of Muslim Educational Practices and Islamic Educational Institutions* in their traditional context should be analyzed, classified, and recorded, to be one of the basic historical resources of the practical side of Islamic Education.

From such activities, many university educational courses could be designed, and many resource books, and textbooks could be prepared such as:

- The Foundations of Islamic Education.
- The Philosophy of Islamic Education.
- The History of Islamic Education.
- A Series of books on Islamic Educational Thought of a great many Muslim educators.
- The value system in Islam and its Implication for Education.
- Education and Islamic Society.
- A host of Comparative Studies in Education in the light of Islam.
- Comparing Islamic Education with Education in other Societies.
- etc. . . .

B. *The Present Dimension: Dealing with Present Educational Problems in an Islamic Context*

This strategy deals with producing educational works such as:

1. A comprehensive classification of contemporary articles and writings on various topics and themes of worthwhile value, in Islamic education which would be published in a series of books of readings to be used as references by college students and professors of Islamic Education in various university courses on Islamic Education.
2. Compilation of evaluative reports on various worthwhile Educational Islamic projects, practices, pilot studies, and experiments.

This will help the student of Islamic Education deal with contemporary Educational problems in an Islamic context and makes Islamic Education a live subject and not merely a historical subject.

3. Compilation and classification of all continuing efforts and suggestions pertaining to the problem of Islamization of knowledge, using applicable ideas in practical situations.
4. Making an Islamic Encyclopedia of Education and updating it to be used as a reference on the subject of Islamic Education by all those who are concerned.

This project can be carried out by Islamic Research Centers, Islamic universities, or through collaboration among them.

5. Making an Islamic Educational Dictionary, that incorporates traditional Islamic terminology in the field of education as well as modern terminology to bridge the gap and facilitate communication between the two systems.

Such activities will result in a wealth of educational references necessary for the process of Islamization of knowledge, namely:

- Books of readings on contemporary educational problems and practices in an Islamic context.
- Encyclopedias and dictionaries that facilitate quick use and fast communications in the field.

C. *The Future Dimension: Projecting Islamic Solutions for*

*Educational Problems and Planning to Meet Future Challenges*

This strategy is concerned with the future of Islamization of Education and aims at sustaining the momentum of Islamization through preparing the necessary models of curricula, preparing Islamized Educators who will continue the process, and emphasizing the institutional aspects rather than the individualistic approach. This endeavour might include various activities, such as:

1. Carrying out critical studies for the curricula of various subjects in schools and universities from the Islamic point of view in various Islamic countries. The feedback from such studies will help in providing information necessary for the Islamization process of various aspects of the educational process.
2. Designing Islamic curricula for various school subjects to serve as a model in an ideal Islamic state. This model could be adopted partially and adapted to meet certain Muslim needs in certain countries.
3. Designing model Islamic curricula for Muslim minorities to help them preserve their Islamic Identity and yet live effectively in their societies.
4. Designing modern curricula for the preparation of Muslim educators at university level in various branches of education to be used for Muslim teachers, Muslim Guidance workers, Muslim Educational Administrators, etc. . . .
5. Organizing a project for the educational preparation of future university professors for various fields of knowledge in order to implement the principles and values of Islamic education in their institutional activities with their disciplines and students.
6. Continuous cooperation among university Muslim professors in the process of Islamization of knowledge in various fields in general and in the field of education in particular.
7. Supporting international Islamic periodicals concerned with the process of Islamization of knowledge in general, and education in particular, and help in their widespread distribution.

D. *Miscellaneous Activities*

This will include activities such as:

1. Encouraging scientific research in education in an Islamic context done by individuals or institutions. This will include supporting research done by graduates, masters, and doctoral students who prepare their dissertations in the light of Islamic thought.
2. Launching a crash programme for preparing university professors who will combine in their education Shari'ah sciences and modern education and sciences.
3. Encouraging translation of all worthwhile educational works into the main two languages of Arabic and English, as well as translation into other Muslim country languages as the need arises.

In conclusion, the process of Islamization of the Discipline of Education is an integral part of the whole process of Islamization of knowledge. It is a continuous process, and needs all sincere efforts to do the job, with the blessing of Allah.

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