

Quranic Educational Theory: Bridging the Split between the Sacred and the Secular

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the existing problem in the educational scenario of Pakistan in particular and Muslim Ummah in general. The paper discusses the Quranic Educational Theory as the ultimate solution to the prevailing confusion in the educational curriculum: the split between the religious and the modern education. The Quran embodies a unique, self-contained and distinctive educational policy. It embraces all the fundamental rules upon which international systems and relations are based, as well as the relation of the individual to society, while secular systems have failed to provide an appropriate education to the individual and society. Islam also offers a suitable moral alternative. The paper stresses the need to formulate a workable, integrated curriculum based on the unique philosophy and methodology of the Holy Quran and Sunnah. It attempts to prove that there is no split between the sacred and profane in Islam, since Islam believes in ultimate balance, where 'Adab' and 'Hikmah' are the final goals of education. The best remedy to the existing split scenario is to organize Muslim education curriculum on the basis outlined briefly below, if Muslims want to restore their lost stature and status according to the Quranic acclamation: 'Muslims are the best generations that are raised onto mankind.'

Introduction

From an Islamic point of view, the Quran is the word of Allah, which was revealed to the Prophet (SAW), through angel Gabriel. The Quran contains all that is required in order to lead a happy life in this world as well as in the Hereafter. In 6:38, it is clearly mentioned, "Nothing have We omitted from the Book."

The Quran has an explanation for everything. In 16:89, it is mentioned:

*And we have sent down
To thee the Book explaining
And glad tidings to Muslims*

The Quran provides man with useful knowledge (*Ilm-e-Nafi*) which regulates man's relationship with Allah, the human beings and the environment. This is explicit in many ways. The first point is that the derivation of the term "*tarbiyah*" mostly interpreted as (education) occurs on several occasions. In fact the term "*Rabb*" (God) and "*tarbiyah*" are considered by Arab (lexicographers) to be derived from the same root. Allah is described as "*Rabb-ul-Almeen*" in the Holy Quran. Since the concern here is with the education of human beings, it is noteworthy that Allah is believed to have taught the first man on this earth the names of all things. Thus the derivations of *Ilm* (knowledge) are numerous, and this is clarified from the fact that the most well known names given to the revealed message are the Quran and the *Kitab*. The former is derived from "*Qara'a*" (read) and the latter is derived from "*Kataba*" (wrote). Hence both names are linked to educational concepts (Salih, 1982).

The second point is that the Prophet (SAW) himself identified his message with that of an educator (*Mu'allim*). He is the supreme example of a person who comprehended Allah's message, religion, learnt it full and taught it to others. From an educational point of view, this was the first breakthrough in mass education.

The third point is that if one accepts that the Qur'an has a definite outlook towards life, then it becomes necessary to accept another fact which is built upon it; the Qur'an provides humanity with certain educational principles or guidelines. Muslim educators will find in the Quran the guiding principles which help in selecting the content of the curriculum. They constitute the foundation of Islamic Educational Theory. Moreover the word "*Hikmah*" occurs in the Quran in nineteen ayahs. According to the Arab lexicographers "*Hikmah*" means knowledge of the best thing in the best senses. More over the word "*Hikmah*" is interpreted to have two basic elements; namely "*Ilm*" (knowledge) and "*Amal*" (action). In (2:269) it is clearly stated that the person to whom "*Hikmah*" is granted, receives overflowing benefit and ranks very high (Abdullah, 1979).

Thirdly, the man's nature itself reveals the relevance and rationale of Islamic philosophy of education. Man has a dual nature; he is both soul and body, physical being and spirit (15:29,23:12-14). God has taught him the names (*al-asma*) of everything (2:31). By names we infer the knowledge of everything (*al-ashiya*). It also refers to the knowledge of accidents (*arad*) and attributes (*sifah*) pertaining to things sensible and intelligible (*mehsusat* and *maqulat*) so that relations and distinctions existing between them can be known. Man is also given knowledge about God (*ma'rifah*), His absolute oneness (*Rabb*) and the object of worship (*Illah*)(7:172, 3:133338). The seat of knowledge in man is his spirit or soul (*al nafs*), his heart (*al qalb*) and his intellect (*al aql*). By virtue of the fact that man knows God in his absolute oneness, such knowledge determining his purpose, attitude and action with respect to himself and to God, has bound man in a covenant (*mithq'ahd*). This binding and determining of man to a covenant with God is binding and determining in religion (*din*) and in real submission (*aslama*). Thus (*din*) and (*aslama*) are mutual co-relates in the nature of man (*fitrah*). Mans purpose is do *ibadah* to God (5:51) and his duty is obedience (*ta'ah*) to God, but man is also prone to forgetfulness (*nisyan*) and he is called insane (20:115)(Abdullah, 1979).

Man has two souls: The higher rational soul (*Al- nafs-Alnatiqah*) and the lower animal soul (*Al- nafs-Al hayawaniyyah*). It is the rational soul that knows God. In order for a man to fulfill his covenant with God, the rational soul must assert its supremacy over the animal soul, and the rule exercised by the rational soul over the animal soul is in fact *din* and total submission of the latter to the former is *aslama*. Islam and Din leads to the excellence in the religious conduct (*Ihsan*) (Al-Afendi and Baloch,1980).

Man in totality is locus (*mahal*), a state, a cosmopolis. The concept of man as a microcosmic representation (*Al Saghir*) of the macrocosmos (*Al-Alm-al-Kabir*) is most important in relation to knowledge which is his paramount attribute and which is responsible for effective establishment of just order in himself, his being and existence. The real nature of man thus provides the rational basis for aims and objectives of Islamic Education (Al-Afendi and Baloch,1980).

Fourthly, the nature and concept of knowledge in Islam, itself, bridges the gap and split between the sacred and secular systems of

Education. It is generally agreed that knowledge requires no definition (hadd). It is also agreed that knowledge can be divided between two essential elements: the first kind of knowledge is given by God through revelation to man, and this refers to the Holy Quran.

The Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Shariah are the essential elements of the first kind of knowledge. This spiritual knowledge and wisdom can only be received through acts of worship and actions of service to God (*Ibadat*) depending upon God's grace and man's own capacity created by God to receive it. The man receives by direct insight (*dhwaq*) and unveiling to his spiritual vision (*kashf*).

The second kind of knowledge refers to the knowledge of sciences (*ulum*) and is acquired through observation, experience and research. It is discursive and deductive and refers to objects of eternal value. The first kind of knowledge is obligatory to all Muslims (*farz'ayn*) and the other is obligatory to some Muslims only (*Farz' kifaya*) (Abdullah, 1979).

It is thus clear that the Islamic theory of education should mainly stem from Qur'an itself, if it is to possess its own merits. Because the Quran contains one unified outlook towards humanity and the universe, the education theory which rests upon it should be unified. In Islam there is no such thing as the sacred and the secular in the education system. Both form an integral part of Islamic educational curriculum. Practically the situation becomes clearer by looking at the aims and objectives and the curricula of Islamic Education.

Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education

It is the philosophy behind education that determines the aims and objectives of Education. There are different philosophies of education, naturally there are different aims and objectives of education. The fundamental aim of Islamic education is to produce a good human being, family society and humanity. The basic element inherent in the concept of Islamic education is the inculcation of "*Adab*", that is an all-inclusive term and encompasses the spiritual and material life of man. It emphasizes the quality of goodness that is sought after. Education is what the Prophet (SAW), meant by *Adab* when He said: "*My Lord educated (adaba) and made my education (ta'dib) most excellent.*" (Abdullah, 1979).

Adab thus refers to the recognition and acknowledgement of

one's right and proper place, station and condition in life, and to self-discipline in a positive way and willingness to enact one's role and responsibilities in accordance with that recognition and acknowledgement which then reflects the condition of justice. Loss of Adab implies loss of justice which in turn leads to confusion in knowledge.

Besides this, there are several terms used in Arabic with reference to educational outcomes. They indicate the existence of objects that direct human actions: '*Ghayat*', '*Muntaha*', '*Ahdaf*' and so on. In (16:9) we read:

Wa-minha jahir

Wa'ata Allah qasd-al-sabil

"*Qasd-al-Sabil*" is interpreted to mean the straight path of the rightly guided which leads to desirable outcomes. The path described as "*Jahir*" can not lead to fruitful outcomes. Thus in Islamic education the general aim is to build up the individuals who have to act as Allah's Khalifa. The main concern of Allah's Khalifa is to believe in Allah and subject oneself completely to Him. Thus the educational aims in Islam are designed to serve three basic motives or objectives: moral-spiritual, intellectual and physical: secular-economic.. Failure to do so results in producing a person who is not qualified for a Khalifa. The objectives are : physical (*Ahdaf jismiyya*), spiritual (*ahdaf ruhiyyah*) and mental (*ahdaf aqliyyah*). It is stated in the Qur'an (2:247):

Allah hath chosen him above you

and hath gifted him

Abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess.

Islamic education aims at encouraging deep thinking and sound understanding and not mere rote learning. "Do they not consider the Quran with care (*yata dabbaruna*)"(4:82) (Salih, 1982).

Social aspect of the Khalifa are catered to in Islamic education. The Islamic curriculum aims at the acquisition of certain social skills relating to the family and society. Social evils are discouraged. It promotes moral and humane (altruistic) values, family bonds and social ties. Education in Islam is concerned with developing the unique characteristics of human beings so that he will be able to adapt to the standards of the society. The characteristic of Islamic education is to prepare the individual for this life and the Hereafter (Sharif,1987).

The function of Islamic education is to make knowledge and insight a basis of practical life. So, vocational education in Islam is necessary along with the education of intellect.

Islamic education encourages integrated vision of life, and unity and unisation (*tawhid*) in personal life, social transactions, economic activity, political power sharing, cultural manifestations. It is based upon comprehensive and unified outlook which sustains a unique, self-contained and distinctive educational policy. Being integrated as a single unity, Islamic education aims to eliminate duality, contradictions and conflicts in human life, while harmonizing life with cosmic unity. It aims at the inculcation of faith in the minds and hearts of individuals and emphasizes the correction of morals and spiritual edification of the soul. It requires man to believe in Allah, be righteous, loving and compassionate towards his fellowmen and thus fosters a sound religious belief (Wasiullah, 1981).

Islamic education prepares the individual to acquire the capacity to educate themselves for the rest of their lives.

In Islam there is no compulsion in religion. There is complete freedom. "*La Ikraha fiddin, Qad tabayyanur Rushdu min ul Ghai*". Every thing depends on *Niyyah* or intention and the reason why we do things (Hussain and Ashraf, 1979).

In Islam, commitment is not to a person but to a particular principle- a principle to which Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was himself committed, who acknowledged the validity of supreme doctrine that had called upon man to submit to God's will.

There is no such thing as a narrow, rigid and authoritarian basis for a programme of national education that can be found within the framework of the Islamic Ideology. Islam is all out for open enquiry and demands loyalty to facts. In fact Islam has come to rescue mankind from the narrowness and authoritarian bigotry of the dark ages of Europe.

The general educational aims are fixed and final. The finality of the Prophet implies the finality of the ideas preached by Muhammad (SAW). Quranic principles are unchangeable. Thus Islamic educational aims are universal and final.

To conclude, educational aims are the foundation of any school curriculum, and they determine its characteristics. Islam has a very balanced approach towards education. It emphasizes materialistic

control and the development of moralism as the first step to spiritualism. The main aim is to keep Muslims on the right path in their individual as well as collective capacity.

The Content of Education (Curriculum)

The educational aims discussed above cannot be achieved unless the educators select and design and appropriate content for the school curriculum. The content is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The content should be designed in such a way that realisation of the aims becomes more feasible.

So long as educational aims differ from one another, the content of curricula also varies accordingly. Thus there can be no universal well-defined content, which is agreed upon by educators for any specific grade. The Qu'ran is considered the cornerstone of Islamic educational theory. Its principles form the integral factor that unites the different subject matters which constitute the curricula. The first category of subjects covers moral sciences e.g. (*Islamiat*).

The second category includes the human sciences: different fields of knowledge which study man as an individual and as a member of a society, and the material sciences (Physics, Chemistry etc).

The third and the last category includes the field of knowledge which is concerned with the study of nature. They may be called as "*alum-a-kawniyyah*" (natural science) which include biology, astronomy and botany etc (Salih,1982).

In the beginning, when Islam was a mere faith, instruction and education were not a complex affair. The verses of the Qur'an came to be communicated by words of mouth and committed to memory. But when Islam crossed the borders of its cradles and spread in Syria (635), Babylonian (636), Assyria (640), Egypt (642), important developments occurred. The science of grammar and historiography and specifically Islamic and religious branches of knowledge: tradition, *Fiqh*, *Tafseer*, *Hadith*, and *Al-kalam* were developed. Speculative thought also began to play an important role in educational life of Muslims. Reason joined hands with faith, the works of Greek philosophers, physicians and mathematicians were translated into Arabic. Schools were established and great mathematicians and philosophers emerged. Famous among them were Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn-Sina. Thus from about the middle of the 9th century to the

beginning of 12th century, great centers of learning in the world were Muslim schools of Iraq (Qureshi,1983 and Shalaby,1979).

The scholars of Iraq had drawn up a scheme of education. They were the Brothers of sincerity (*Ikhwan-e-Safa*) whose aim was to impart as complete an education as the sciences of time rendered possible. The system of the *Ikhwan-e-Safa* was laid down in an encyclopedia written in about 2000 A.D. which is divided into 51 tracks arranged under four headings (Qureshi,1983):

1. Properdentic (on preliminary learning) and logic, 13 treatises.
2. Natural Sciences, 17 treatises.
3. The Rational World - said (Metaphysics). 10 treatises.
4. Revealed Law (Theology) 11 treatises.

The encyclopedia deals first with the concrete subjects and then with more complicated problems of life with the theories of divine law when they were revealed. In addition to Islamic subjects, there were Geography, Algebra, Geometry, Astronomy etc.

The Muslim Curricula including the academic and extra mural, the approved and disapproved subjects, the whole range of learning among the Muslims is thus summarized by Abu-Yuha Zaharia as follows: (Salih,1982).

Muslim Curriculum

Legal Subjects (Shariayya)	Literary Studies (Adabiyah)	Mathematics (Rayaziyyah)	Rational (Aqliyyah)	Miscellaneous
Jurisprudence	Philology	Geometry	Logic	Surveying
Exegesis	Syntax	Astronomy	Dialectics	Veterinary
Traditions	Rhetorics	Arithmetic	Dogmatic	Agriculture
	Prosody	Algebra	Theology	Magic
	Composition	Music	Metaphysics	Astrology
	Reading	Politics	Medicine	Phrenology
	History	Ethics	Chemistry	Interpretation of dreams

According to Karim (1979), Faris (1962) and Zuberi (1986), there are three kinds of learning which Ghazzali considers important for a student:

Science of Medicine, Law (Fiqh) (for the welfare of people)	Science of travelling in deserts. (purify the mind from evil traits)	Knowledge of pilgrimage (rules and regulations)
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The above discussion shows that dualism in the content of curriculum which exists between man and the universe on the one hand and the Qur'an on the other is contradictory to the spirit of Islamic theory of education and the Qur'anic outlook. Both the secular and the sacred are harmonized and integrated in the Islamic education curriculum. Thus the ultimate aim of Islamic education curricula is the inculcation of the concept of Allah in the minds and souls of believers. In order to achieve this aim, Islamic curriculum comprises the following components: (Al-Afendi and Baloch, 1980).

- a. The concept of Allah
- b. The Individual personality
- c. Individual responsibility
- d. Guided Individual freedom
- e. Social responsibility
- f. Learning and consultation
- g. Family relations
- h. Social solidarity
- i. Social education.

Looking at the modern curriculum suggested by great Muslim thinkers, it can be easily concluded that it was based on two main pillars: the Quran and the Prophet (SAW) traditions and on related studies. There exists no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.

It is time to organize Muslim Curricula on the above mentioned basis so as to integrate them while modernizing them. That will also help to redress the discrepancy existing in the current educational curricula, Islamic and the Western.

The Present Scenario

The concept of Islamic education as suggested in this paper appears to be unrealistic and inapplicable in the present day world dominated by science and technology rather than the spiritual values. We in our educational institutions are making frenzied efforts to produce good administrators, engineers, doctors, teachers and scientist and the like but in the context of students waywardness, we have never made a sincere effort to ignite in our learners a moral space that may prove a beacon of light in their life now and later.

In nearly all the Muslim countries, there are two systems of education: the religious and secular or modern, which are independent

and irreconcilable. Modern education has its own schools, institutes, colleges and universities and the religious education has its own system called Madrasahs. The segregation of the religious from the secular system is also reflected in the policies of educational institutions, and the functions, aims and objectives of schools and universities.

Modern education differs from the Islamic in that it is built on two hypotheses: It does not recognize the supremacy of religion and it seeks to divorce religion from life. Islamic education attaches considerable importance to religious matters as well as to everyday problems of life and living. Modern secular education merely considers happiness in this world as its final goal, where as Islamic education regards life as only a means of achieving happiness in the Hereafter. Life on earth is but a bridge which a man must cross before he enters into spiritual life after death. The basic difference between aims and objectives of modern and Islamic education leads to differences in methods by which the aims and objectives are achieved.

This duality or artificial division is at variance with the principles of Islam. In Islam there is no segregation between religious and secular education. They are inseparable and indivisible. Neither aspects should be overemphasized at the expense of others. In the early days of Islam, there was only one system of education which taught purely theological subjects. Today the traditional system starts with the reading of the Quran (*Tajweed, Qirat and Hifz*) *Fiqh, Hadith*, Arabic language and literature are core subjects. In some places classical logic (*Mantiq*) which ignore all the development in the West is taught. Islamic philosophy is included in diluted form. Comparative religion, comparative study of Western and Islamic legal system developed in the West, is absent. The method does not include free inquiry or even free thinking. The teacher is regarded as the model for the learners. The challenges of modern civilization are not answered, nor are their magnitudes realized (Haq, 1990).

Modern education means secular education, according to which religious subjects are treated in the same way as the non-religious subjects such as mathematics and geography. The approach to knowledge is somewhat skeptic. The theoretical aim is to help the growth of balanced personality and to preserve the moral code, but both the teachers and learners find it difficult to subscribe to a

common ethical norm. How can one hope for a selfless relationship between the two poles if it is based on mundane and commercialized considerations and is not strengthened by genuine love for learning and affection, and a burning zeal for the acquisition of knowledge and reverence for the one who teaches.

The basic differences between Islamic and secular education are currently neglected and frequently overlooked by those working in the field of education throughout the Muslim world. The political and economic instability of many Muslim countries are seen against the background of the political supremacy, material progress, industrial and economic development of the non- Muslim countries, which has resultantly alienated Muslims from the principles and teachings of Islam. It has led them to believe that merely by copying, borrowing or transplanting non-Islamic education system, they can match the progress already achieved in the non-Muslim countries (Hussain and Ashraf, 1979).

In the present system, knowledge is an intellectual acquisition, which may or may not have direct relationship with the traditional concept of virtue. Muslims have imported from western sociology, scientific assumptions and hypothesis, sociological analysis of life and conflicting formulations, which are directly contradictory to their traditional religious assumptions. As a result 'hypocrisy' has become a public style and anxiety is increasing, both at the individual-cum-family, and social level. In most Muslim countries the old established society is being replaced by a new society in which the individual is regarded less as human being within a family and more as a legal abstraction, having rights rather than duties. This conflict in the educational field has given rise to insincerity and tension among people degenerating into bloodshed. The traditional values and attitude to life is thus in conflict with modernity. This conflict is tearing apart not only the young and the old but also the traditionalists and the modernists. Because of these opposed social pulls and pressures, social polarization and class differences, confrontation and conflict are becoming a reality. In Pakistan they are the result of three conflictual streams of Education:

1. Private, Western, English medium secular system.
2. Indigenous mixed media, state system of education.
3. The Madrasahs

Above all, Muslims have not achieved much material and political progress, nor has this dual system of education satisfied their wants, needs and desires or answered their inner-most spiritual yearnings.

Educational Remedy: Abolition of Duality for Indigenization and Futurization

Education is the best means of creating a new generation of young men and women who will neither lose touch with their own roots, moorings and traditions, nor become intellectually retarded or remain educationally backward, unaware of the development in any branch of human knowledge. Unfortunately such a modern- futuristic system of education is yet not prevalent in any Muslim country.

The remedy to the present educational crisis lies first in the abolition of the duality in education. Any segregation between the religious and the secular streams should be eliminated. Scholarly specialization in any field is futile and inadequate in the building up of ones personality unless one is on equal terms with both the secular and religious aspects of life.

It is an undeniable fact that the average and elite Muslim's hold on religion has weakened. Religion has gradually been banished from modern Muslims minds and hearts. In such a situation only the school curricula are the most effective channel of information through which religious education can be promoted and projected. For this purpose two things need to be done simultaneously:

First, religious guidance must not be restricted to formal traditional lessons on religion.

Second, the syllabi designed for education should be reconsidered and revised on the same lines as was formulated and practiced by Imam Ghazali and Ibn-e-Khuldoon.

To make Allah's doctrine reign supreme, a self contained and sound educational system should be developed. Saying one's prayer at the proper time is essential educationally. That is the first step to the Islamic code of conduct and behaviour pattern among children and youth. That would enable them to adhere to Islamic morals, manners as well as education.

The object of education is basically to produce good men and women. This end cannot be achieved through a few disintegrated pieces of religious education, to be learnt by heart and tested at the end

of the school year. The curricula and lessons if properly planned, will contribute to the growth of religious consciousness, completely different from that of sermonizing. The focus needs to be on the “*Haquq*”, both Allah and *Alebad*- both in theory and practice. That is how good conscientious human beings, and responsible professionals are produced.

Thus in order to rectify the present situation, an attempt must be made to reconcile the dichotomy existing in the educational standard and effort should be made to divert the students attention to that ‘all inclusive togetherness of things which is both the first step of naiveté and the last step of sophistication’ (Jalalzai,n.d). This challenge is a mammoth which demands an educational Jihad. This Jihad can be launched if the educational edifice is erected upon the educational principles propounded by the Quran and which later Ghazali and many more modelled and actualized in the light of universal notions revealed 1425 years ago.

No doubt the hands of the clock of history cannot put back, but progress is not the negation of ideals. A student can only sustain in the midst of all the paraphernalia which the modern world demands, if one develops a positive attitude commended by Qur’an and Sunnah.

Conclusion

Muslims have lost sight of the real meaning and significance of Islamic revelation, and the precious experience, wisdom and insight of their ancestors. Muslims have failed to carry out the explicit injunctions of the Quran to mitigate the evils of ignorance, poverty, disease and low standards of living among the masses. A wide gulf between belief and practice is seen today throughout the Muslim world.

Now there is a surge of Islamic renaissance: revival and reawakening throughout the Muslim world. Muslims are responding to the opportunities and challenges offered by the wave of freedom and democracy around the world reasserting their Islamic identity. There is a yearning amongst Muslims to reorder their lives and institutions according to the Islamic principles. All that is required is to bring its moral values home to every Muslim through free, compulsory and universal education. True Islamic culture and civilization, depends mainly upon bridging the gulf between the secular and religious

systems of education which has led to an unfortunate cleavage in Muslim society.

May Allah help and guide Muslims to the Right path – Ameen.

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