

## Education in Islam: Contemporary Issues and Challenges

Mohsen Tousi

*Pishrayan Privet Research Institute.  
North Sohrevardi Boulevard, West Shahid Mirza Zainali Street, Tehran*

---

**Abstract** *In the words of god in Qur'an, he calls human as his best creation. He orders angels to prostrate in front of first human creation. This shows the dignity and human's place among other creatures. This dignity is first because of the god spirit that is given to human specially and secondly because of wisdom that only human have. In Islamic belief human is full of potential talents and abilities that should be actualized by education and training. The main purpose of Islamic education is seeking the truth and achieving salvation, this can be achieved by education and intellection alongside with refinements. In Islamic point of view rational growth can take place parallel to ethical growth and these two cannot be parted. as ethics without science is idiotic, science without ethics is stupidity. Always in our moral and religious books, science and ethics are together and religion that shows his most interest and attention to acquisition of knowledge, says that the goal of his messenger is to show the best morality and ethics to the world. Islamic education is a perfect comprehensive system, which looks in to all human dimensions. In the process of Islamic education development of mind and body, worldly life and hereafter, society and individual have the same level of important and none of them should be ignored. Intelligent and wisdom have a special place in Islamic teaching. This importance has been said in 300 verses in Qur'an.*

**Key words:** *Qur'an, human, Islamic education, Islam, Islamic teaching.*

---

### Introduction

The word Education means, learning and teaching, the first meaning that comes to mind is induction of a subject by the master to the minds of students, so the pupils could imitate it from the teacher and learn to repeat it. But the true meaning of teaching is much deeper and significant, and if we look at it with more accuracy we find that teaching is to make changes in student, teaching and transforming the mode of ignorance to make them independent thinkers and give them intellectual growth.

The issue of education in Islam it is so important that in the first verses that God says to Prophet Mohammad (peace be up on him): " إقرأ باسم . . . "

Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Honorable. Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not. (alagh 1- 5)

And in another verse he says: "... Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful..." (Zomar / 9) and " Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? Thus what they did was made fair seeming to the unbelievers. " (anam / 122) " Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the chest." (Hajj / 46) and Ali ebne abitaleb (peace be up on him) says: knowledge is resuscitator of soul, and Clarifies the mind, and is fatal for ignorance and asininity. (Ghorarol Hakam, p. 54 and 68)

Upbringing means to raise, to nurture, develop and teach ethics to someone. The general meaning of upbringing is to develop everything in good shape, and this meaning includes, plants, animals and humans and is also used in the cultivation of body and soul.

In Islam upbringing means training the ability to convey the actuality and make balance and coordination between them and use them in order to achieve perfection.

In Islamic aspects first we have to understand human talents and ability and then train and educate because the profound truth of human dimensions existence is complicated, it is difficult for humans to understand, and on the other hand diagnosis and reason of human is surrounded by a curtain of instincts and material so he himself is not able to complete the planning, preparing and supplying a complete law for themselves, therefore, God Almighty has set the law and His Messengers has to train it to humans.

As Quran says:

و نفس و ما سويها فالهمها فجورها و تقويها قد افلح من زكيا و قد خاب " (Shams 7 / 10) من دسها

And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, Then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it, He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it.

And elsewhere says: " And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendor of this world's life, that We may thereby try them; and the sustenance (given) by your Lord is better and more abiding.. "

Prophet (peace be upon him): " من لم يتأدب باداب الله تقطعت نفسه على الدنيا " (Bihar Alanvar, Beirut, Institute Alvfa', c. 11, p. 348.) who does not grown and educated with the divine education, will die with sorrow and regret of the world and the universe. "

God in the Quran considers all human knowledge and awareness beyond the human mind and intellectuality, because Quran speaks of knowledge and sciences that people already know them. This knowledge is not the internal findings and spontaneous knowledge, but they are education, awareness and knowledge that come from outside of the human mind and the perception.

(...وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا) (Baqara / 31)

"And He taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels; then He said: Tell me the names of those if you are right."

(عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَم) (alagh / 5)

"Taught man what he did not knew."

(خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ\*عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ) (Rahman / 3-4)

"Created man and taught him to speak."

Other categories of knowledge are the one that later in the life will be achieved. Clearly they are also adventitious and should be received from outside;

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ ( وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ (Nahl / 78)

"And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers-- you did not know anything-- and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you may give thanks."

In this verse, he speaks of all sciences and knowledge that people gain in life (acquired knowledge). He noted that these knowledge and the tools and equipment from outside for studying it, is also created by him. As awareness of the Prophet David, which symbolizes knowledge Armory and is a sample of empirical and acquired knowledge, is educated by God;

(وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ) (anbiya / 80)

"And we taught him to make armor for you, that they might protect you in your wars; will you then be grateful?"

Some other knowledge is knowledge that are Inducted to minds and hearts of prophets of God.

There are many verses that shows teaching that knowledge to Prophet David, Joseph, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them) that some of them are:

(...وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ) ( Baqara / 251)

" And David killed Jalut, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased."

(...وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ) ( Joseph / 6)

"And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams."

(...وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ) ( Maedeh / 110)

"And when I taught you the Book and the wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel..."

(...وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ) ( Nesa / 113)

"And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know,"

The relation between learning and knowledge and science it is so clear that even ignorant pagan Arabs knew that the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) has to have learned what he was saying, but there problem was from whom he was learning it. They said he was learning it from jen or another person and not all mighty God.

(...وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ) ( Nahl / 103)

"And certainly we know that they say: Only a mortal teaches him."

And God answers the pagans, by saying that what the prophet know has been thought to him by god, that way he accepted that the prophet had learned what he was saying but he also says that he was learning it from God.

(إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ \*عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ) (star / 4-5)

"What he says, is nothing but a revelation that was revealed to him. It is one of the great powers that have taught him. "

Some knowledge that are accessible to man are harmful to human therefore they are faulty and are not recommended to be learned by humans. This shows that destructive and harmful knowledge is adventitious and should be learned.

وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكِينَ بِبَابِلَ ( ...هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ) (Baqara / 102)

"And they followed what the Shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Suleiman, and Suleiman was not an unbeliever, but the Shaitans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and that was sent down to the two angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, yet these two taught no man until they had said, "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever." Even then men learned from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission, and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them, and certainly they know that he who bought it should have no share of good in the hereafter and evil was the price for which they sold their souls, had they but known this."

The result of what we have just said is that the knowledge of all creatures that have the ability to learn have external source to teach them or learn from it. That external source can be God, Satan, Angel, or other sources for learning.

However, refinement is more the achievement of the will, intent, motive and internal efforts for Self-restraint from abominations and obscenity. As it is said in some verses in Quran:

(قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا) (Shams / 9)

"He will indeed be successful who purifies it"

(قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى) (aala / 14)

"He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself"

(وَمَنْ تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ) (Fater / 18)

"And whoever purifies himself, he purifies himself only for (the good of) his own soul"

The goal of Islamic education and training is to build a Perfectionist human, society and civilization. Ideal humanity is to conceive the rationality and grow Intellectual trends and spirit. So that's why in Quran

education and Upbringing are used together. Sometimes it is emphasizes on education and sometimes it is emphasizes on Upbringing.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (Baqara / 129) (وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ)

"Lord! And raise up in them an Apostle from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. "

And elsewhere says (هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (jomaeh / 2). (وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ)

" He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error"

Allameh tabatabaai explains the two above verse:

"In jomeh verse Upbringing has come prior than education, because it is talking about upbringing and educating the people by prophet that means wisdom is more important than knowledge. But in ebrahim verse he is asking god to give knowledge and wisdom to his generation and race. In verse jomeh it is showing the order of learning that is first to learn wisdom then you will reach the knowledge."(Tabatabaai, 19/265)

Whatever is the secret of which one of them is first or second is not important, what is very important is that in Islam for having one of them you need to have the other as well. You cannot achieve knowledge and forget wisdom or other way around. This kind of person in Islam is not a perfect human.

It is on such an approach that science and knowledge is not the basic and preface of training and upbringing, they are requirements and demands of each other.

From this perspective, the objective scientific approach to encourage people to find ways to teach and to learn can be achieved.

So all divine religions are based on education and training and have been initiated by education. With all that we said in Islam the importance of reading and teaching is showed more than any other religion. With all the value that Islam have for "بِسْمِ اللَّهِ" the name of Allah, but god started his first words with the prophet with the order to read "اقْرَأْ". God did not command his messenger to: Say, listen, repeat, see, sense, or ..., but said: read. Then he speaks of training, creation, and humans.

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ \* خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ \* اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ \* الَّذِي (aLagh / 1-5) (عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ \* عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ)

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honorable. Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not. "

Because of the beginning like this reading has become the first duty. And there was no excuses left for not learning and teaching, for learning new science and knowledge all boundaries should be removed.as the prophet says" learn and achieve science and knowledge even if it is presented in the far part of the world."

And to remind man that no matter how much he studies and learns he still have not learned more than a drop from the sea of knowledge.

(وَمَا أُوتِيْتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا) (Asra' / 85) "And they ask you about the soul. Say: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord, and you are not given aught of knowledge but a little. "

(وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ) (Joseph / 76) "and above every one possessed of knowledge is the All-knowing one. "

Although prophet mohammad (peace be upon him) had achieved the highest knowledge from the god, but still he was addressed to pray for more knowledge.

(وَ قُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا) (Taha / 114) " O my Lord! Increase my knowledge. "

And if it was other than this, he could have not become an ideal man for all mankind.

(إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ \* عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ) (Yasin / 3-4) " Most surely you are one of the apostles, on a right way."

The main factor that human community and evolved Muslims society can reach and receive the perfect knowledge and science is based on freedom.

Freedom means releasing from all attachments that prevent us from thinking, making decisions and held us from doing the work that we have aimed, intended and decided to do.

(وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ) (zariyat / 56) " And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me."

(الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ) (Aeraf / 157) " Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet, the Ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Taurat and the Injeel (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful. "

Based on the pattern of behavior that is provided by these verse, educational and intellectual men and society, will only obey and submission himself to God, He will not go after his ancestors and will not imitate from them, he would free himself from the strings of Imitation, social and national illusions and Superstition and sensual and erotic chains and threats.

## References

Quran

Tabatabaai, Seyed Mohammad, Tfsir Al-mizan, volume 19, published in Tehran, 2005.