

Enactment of Islamic Pedagogy: From Remonstrance to Praxis

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In the modern era of science and technology effective instruction heavily depends upon the pedagogical skills employed by teachers during the teaching-learning process. The contemporary notion of effective instruction refers to the quality of learning but on the other hand the pedagogy derived from Islamic thoughts and practices of successful instruction deals with purposeful learning. Therefore, the Islamic pedagogical paradigm consists of the art and methods of teaching that deal with the individualized fulfillment of educational needs and developing a virtuous personality. The present theoretical study is an effort to trace the roots of modern pedagogies in the Islamic pedagogical practices. It is revealed that although the Islamic pedagogical doctrine is dominated by the teacher-centered instruction, memorization, morality and the use of the written word but the modern pedagogical approaches i.e. student centered instruction, activity based instruction, problem solving and project based instruction, are also, in one way or the other, indebted to the Islamic pedagogical thoughts and practices.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Instruction, memorization, student centered instruction

Education is the change agent and catalyst for the progress and development of societies. In the present day the nations with quality education systems are leading the world both in the technological race and human development indicators. The economies of the world are being driven by the knowledge and its purposeful application. In fact education has become the sign of national solidarity and integration. But, unfortunately none of the Muslim country is in the leading position in the educational or technological developments. Most of the Muslim countries have poor education system which is making them dependent of the Western countries. It has happened despite the glorious educational past and proud knowledge based Islamic civilization. According to Hilgendorf (2003) during the 1000 years of Islamic empire there was consistent emphasis on the knowledge acquisition and teaching-learning activities¹. Muslim scientists and scholars focused almost every branch of knowledge including philosophy, medicine and human sciences. There were as many as 60 major centers of learning across the Islamic Kingdom from Baghdad and Isfahan in the East to Cordoba in the West that possessed the wisest, effective and most

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influential teachers of human knowledge. The glory of the Muslim empire rested on the foundation of knowledge advocated by the Islam since the start. The very first revelation to the Holy Prophet focused the importance of achieving the knowledge as:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اقْرَأْ
وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ
﴿٥﴾²

“Read: In the Name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clot. Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous. He who taught by the pen. Taught man what he never knew.”

The torch bearers of knowledge i.e. Muslims, in the previous millennium are now struggling in pursuit of the glory and respect of the past. Ashaaria et al. (2012) described that proud and grandeur Islamic civilization has declined due to stagnancy in bringing forward innovations or at least new ideas at the practical level³. The Islamic institutions after the 17th century lost their path and focused mainly upon the theatrical viz. philosophy, logic, fiqah, ijmah etc. There was only few people involved in the research, medicine, engineering or scientific knowledge (Ahmad & Glenn, 2013).⁴

The success of any education system, in one way or the other, depends upon different factors including pedagogy i.e. the techniques and methods of instruction. Pedagogy is regarded as the art and science of teaching, especially teaching children (Hill, 1997).⁵ Tochon and Munby (1993) states that pedagogy is associated with immediate image of the teaching situation⁶. Pedagogy depends upon a number of aspects including the nature of the subject being taught, the age, interests, intellect, attitude and the interests of the students involved in the teaching learning process. In short pedagogy is the art of teaching and focus upon the effective process of teaching and learning (Hill, 1997)⁷. Pedagogy is differentiated from the term andragogy by referring the second one to the art and science of teaching adults. According to the connotation of andragogy it refers to psychology and special needs of adult learners (Knowles, 1980⁸ & 1986⁹).

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Globalization has brought numerous changes in human civilization across the globe. People are now well connected to each other and well

informed as compared to the past. It has been made possible by the technological innovations and changes. The educational institutions, being a part and parcel of the society, have also witnessed radical changes owing to the consequences of globalization. The classroom environment and teaching-learning activities has become more interactive, technology dependent and student centered. The modern pedagogy is considered as the sole contribution of western educationists and experts. But, the Islamic academics and scholars assumes that the roots of most of the modern pedagogies lies in the Islamic philosophy of teaching and learning. The present study is an effort to investigate this claim and to find out the emblem of contemporary pedagogy, especially from the origins of Islamic mythology.

The major purpose of this theoretical study is to highlight the important primitive teaching methodologies adopted by Muslim teachers which later on served as the foundation of the modern teaching techniques. Moreover, the study at hand is an effort to bring to light the specific circumstances and conditions for using teacher centered approaches, as stated by most of the modern educationists and experts of pedagogy, for teaching and learning.

Research Methodology

The study at hand deals with the facts of the past as described in different works. Therefore, document analysis, a research method of qualitative nature, was considered appropriate for undertaking this study. A document is something that can be read and it relates to different aspects of the social life of people. There are several types of documents e.g. official documents, legal papers, research papers, newspapers, magazines, books etc. Hence, document analysis is a type of the qualitative research in which different documents are construed by the researcher to explain the phenomenon at hand (Best and Khan, 2010¹⁰; Creswell, 2012¹¹)

The Contemporary Vs Islamic Pedagogies

The focus of the present day instruction is the real understanding of concepts or the mature learning of the students. Therefore, the teachers prefer to adopt such methods of instruction which can help in effective learning and can retain students' interest in the teaching learning process (Shahida, 2010)¹². The same was the purpose of primitive educational endeavors in the Islamic education system. The Teacher, Holy Prophet, launched such a systematic instructional structure that not only the effectiveness of instruction was focused but the purpose of that instruction was well beyond the success of this mortal world. People

memorization, morality and the use of the written word during the teaching-learning process¹⁷. This method had been the choice of teachers of Islamic Education because of its ease in use and at the same time it does not involve any cost. Moreover this method of instruction suits well the content of instruction.

The fact is that Islamic pedagogy adopted the individualized instruction methods and memorization because of its specific requirements e.g. Hifz, Fiqah and Hadith. In fact, according to Nasr (2012), the Western teaching and learning system itself had been deeply influenced by the Islamic pedagogical system¹⁸. For example, similar to the present day individualized teaching methods Islamic pedagogy have concerns about individuals' identity, e.g. it helps in knowing who we are, and what are our obligations.

The focus of Islamic Pedagogy was on the practical and doing. The Holy Prophet on different occasions demonstrated before the believers to teach them various concepts;

عن ابي موسى ان سائلا سال النبي ﷺ فلم يرد عليه شيئا حتى امر
بلالا فاقام الفجر حين انشق الفجر-----و وصل العشاء الى
ثلث الليل، ثم قال اين السائل عن وقت الصلوة؟ الوقت فيما بين
هذين¹⁹،

Abu Musa reported: A man enquired the Prophet [about the times of prayer] but he did not response to him but he ordered Bilal, who made the announcement for the beginning of the Fajar prayer time when the dawn had broken. He offered the Fajar when a man was unable distinguish the face of his companion. He then commanded Bilal who made announcement for the beginning of the time of the Zuhr prayer when the sun had passed the meridian until some said: Has the noon come? While he (the Prophet) knew (the time) well. He then ordered Bilal who announced the beginning of the time of the Asr prayer when the sun was white and high. When the sunset he again ordered Bilal who announced beginning of the time of the Maghrib prayer. When the twilight disappeared he ordered Bilal who announced the beginning of the Isha prayer. This tradition has been transmitted by IbnBuraidah on the authority of his father from the Prophet in a similar way.

In the same way the observation was also regarded as one of the important way for teaching and learning, as in the modern techniques of research and instruction. The senior people of the society i.e. the teachers or the religious and social leaders used to perform before the young lads to instruct them different skills of everyday life. This is the reason that Almighty Allah (SWT) reminds the human being of His through their everyday observation His Greatness and Oneness.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَىٰ الْإِلَهِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ
 ﴿١٨﴾ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ﴿١٩﴾ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ²⁰

“Do they not look at the camels—how they are created? And at the sky—how it is raised? And at the mountains—how they are installed? And at the earth—how it is spread out?”

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) had also asked the followers to observe Him to learn different religious as well as social skills so that those could be performed in the best way in the days to come. Focusing upon the need of observation The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said

“صلوا كما رايتموني اصلي”²¹

“Pray as you observe me praying”

Similarly, in respect of performing Haj the Holy Prophet said

“خذوا عني مناسككم”²²

“Learn from me the Practices (of Haj)”

Repetition, verbal and practical, is another significant trait of the Islamic pedagogical doctrine. The same was focused by The Holy Prophet (PBUH) to memorize the teachings of Islam to the newly converted people.

عن ابي سلام عن رجل خدم النبي- ان النبي كان ” اذا حدث حديثا
 اعاده ثلاث مرات”²³

“Abu Salam said on The Authority of a man who served the Holy Prophet that whenever he talked he repeated it three times”.

This particular method i.e. repetition had constantly been used by the Muslim teachers and students throughout the history for memorizing the Holy Quran and the Hadith. But, on the other hand this is also the method which had been widely criticized by the modern pedagogical experts. For example, Niyozov and Memon (2011) described that different researches which have been carried out in Canada and United States of America on Islamic Madrasas reflected the detachment of its graduates from the real world²⁴. The major reason behind this disengagement was the memorization practices of the Muslim students. Reading the Holy Quran without relating it to the problems of today, sticking in conventional approaches to study the classical texts and the

failure to stir in Islamic thought are important challenges which are merely the outcomes of adopting “repetition” as an important teaching method.

In the modern day pedagogical paradigm the mother tongue is considered essential for the school beginners. The same was focused in the Islamic tradition of instruction. The Holy Prophet instructed the people in their native language and addressed the people according to their intellectual ability. The same is narrated in the Holy Quran as;

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَبِئْسَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ²⁵

“We never sent any messenger except in the language of his people, to make things clear for them. God leads astray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. He is the Mighty, the Wise.”

The above description reflects that despite all the criticism from the western pedagogical experts, all the modern instructional techniques have their roots in the Islamic instructional practices. The fact is that, as stated by Ahmad and Glenn (2013), inadequate understanding of Islamic pedagogy has led the western critics to dodge the recognition of genuine progress in the field of education²⁶. This tendency of contemporary Western research to neglect Islamic pedagogical theories had not been challenged by the Muslim experts in the field of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Islamic system of education has followed the modern lines of social and psychological aspects of teaching and learning since the primitive days. It has focused not only the physical needs of the learners but also addressed the psychological, philosophical and social aspects as well. Although Islamic pedagogical doctrine is dominated by the teacher-centered instruction, memorization, morality and the use of the written word but the modern pedagogical approaches i.e. student centered instruction, activity based instruction, problem solving and project based instruction, use of mother tongue for instruction had also been practiced by the Muslim teachers since the beginning of Islam.

Discussion

Islamic education and its instructional methodology is under severe criticism since 9/11. Rosnani (2005) argued that these challenges are the consequent of the failure of teaching methods and the curriculum to

produce motivated scholars to fulfill the demands of modern technology driven age²⁷. She had labeled the Islamic education as 'lost its heart and mind' and was accused that this system of education is delivering nothing except producing militants and radicalism especially after 9/11. The main reason for this criticism is the Islamic studies being taught in the conventional way i.e. taught either in feigning and theoretical perspectives (Zaki, 2004)²⁸ or isolated the subjects from the modern educational practices (Muda, 2004²⁹; Siddek, 2004)³⁰. Similarly, Ramadan (2004) had related this failure of the Islamization of education system to failure of traditional teaching-learning procedure to develop the required ability to contest the modern world³¹.

But, the fact is that, as discussed above, all the modern methods of the instruction were used in the Islamic institutions. The only difference was that the in Islamic mythology the priority was given to the dominance of teachers during teaching learning process. The same practice was being followed in the western institutions before the 20th century. During the mid of 20th century the paradigm shift took place and child centered instruction was given more importance. Moreover, importance to memorization and repetition in Islamic institutions was given due to the specific nature of content i.e. Hifz (memorization) of the Holy Quran and the Hadith. Hence, Sidek (2004) invited the Muslim educationists and educational institutions across the Muslim world to follow the modern instructional method for producing scholars with a wide-ranging Islamic background to effectively address the socioeconomic problem of the society from an Islamic and up-to-date viewpoint³². This would certainly reduce criticism on the Islamic pedagogy and enable Muslim scholars to compete the world in different spheres of present technology driven society.

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