The Islamic Opinion about Education

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Question: Western and eastern scholars have written many books and detailed studies on education, and Islamic scholars have also written much on this subject. Would you please give us a summary of the Islamic opinion in this concern?

The answer: In spite of what has been said about education by scholars, whether concurring or conflicting, I think that what the Prophet (S) and his progeny (a.s.) have said is the most correct because they are connected, in their sayings, with the Aware Creator, the Lord of the Worlds, Who has sent to us His prophets to purify and teach us. It is the Islamic education that is derived from the Holy Qur'an and the sayings and actions of the Prophet (S) and his progeny. Allah says, (Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know)[1].

Imam Ali (a.s.), the master of the eloquent, the leader of the intellect, and the pioneer of the pious, showed the goal of the prophets' missions by saying, 'And sent to them His prophets, one after the other, to take from them the covenant of His nature, remind them of His forgotten blessings, argue against them with delivering the missions, and move the hidden secrets of minds…[2]'.

Allah has created man for an exalted goal and He knows what He has created. He knows what benefits His creatures and makes them happy and what harms them and makes them wretched. Allah has created man from a spirit, then clothed him with the body, placed in him the will, and granted him the blessing of freedom to choose on his own one of two things: either good or evil. Allah the Almighty says, (Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways?)[3] Allah also says, (Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful)[4].

The task of the prophets, imams, sincere clergymen, and all the followers of this straight path comes to form the conduct of man and guide him to the path of goodness. However, if man, after that, wants evil for himself, he himself is to be blamed. Allah says, (Say: Every one acts according to his manner; but your Lord best knows who is best guided in the path)[5].

This care clearly shows that Allah loves man, has dignified him, and prefers him to most of His creatures. But, has man been sincere to this honor and preference?

Proofs and evidences show that man, as Allah has described him, is unjust and ignorant,

except those who believe in Allah and have been granted knowledge. Allah has elevated such people to confirm that He rewards man for what he chooses for himself; if he follows the path of guidance, he will live happily in this world and be rewarded with the bliss of Paradise in the afterlife, but if he goes astray, he will live wretchedly in this life and be rewarded with the Fire of Hell. There will be degrees and differences among the people of Paradise and the people of Hell according to their level of guidance or deviation.

Allah says, (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)[6]. And this is from the theophanies of the wisdom, justice, and power of Allah in man's life before he is created, in the womb, and after birth. If parents and educationists care greatly for children, the children will grow positively and their hidden powers will take their courses in the right paths.

Imam Zaynol Aabidin (a.s.) says in his supplication, 'O Allah, support me in bringing them up, educating them, being dutiful to them….' Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, 'Everyone is born on the Divine Nature, but his parents make him either a Jew, Christian, or a magus.[7]' Parents should know that their child, when born, is pure and innocent in nature, such is (the nature made by Allah in which He has made men)[8]. Let the parents be careful in how they deal with this pure nature!

In other words, a child is like gold and silver. A skillful goldsmith is able to mold any of these metals in the best way. Please ponder on the questions and answers in this chapter about educating the children who will be, after a few years, masters of their own families and of society, and then see what kind of masters you want!

The most important bases of education

Islam has divided the education of children into three stages. The first stage begins from birth and lasts until the seventh year. In this stage, the child should taste the full meaning of freedom. He should be free to do whatever he likes except if he wants to do something that may harm him, and then he should be prevented in a way that his dignity is not harmed and his freedom is not restrained.

The second stage is from the seventh until the fourteenth year. In this stage, the child should be taught useful knowledge especially the beliefs, juristic principles, morals, and contemporary sciences. The third stage begins after the fourteenth year where the parents by now should have prepared him to be as their friend and as an independent person. However, in this age, the parents should help him in the field of life and teach him good lessons from their experiences. This is in general, but as for the conduct required from you as a mother towards her daughter, I

would like to draw your attention to the following points:

1. You should teach your daughter good habits and morals.

2. You should strengthen in her the motives of goodness, knowledge, and longing for Paradise.

3. Let her see in you the exact practical example of what you tell her!

4. Let yourself be so close to her to the extent that she can speak frankly to you about anything that is in her mind!

5. You should plant in her self-confidence and teach her to not be satisfied with a certain level of success! Always tell her: “High determination is from faith”.

!6. You should continue reading books concerning your goal

Notes:

[1] Holy Qur’an, 2:151.

[2] Nahjol Balagha, sermon 1.

[3] Holy Qur’an, 90:8-10.

[4] Holy Qur’an, 76:3.

[5] Holy Qur’an, 17:84.

[6] Holy Qur’an, 91:7-10.

[7] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2 p.87.

.[8] Holy Qur’an, 30:30