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The Concept of Lifelong Learning in Islam and Its Implications for Modern Education
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Abstract

The Islamic tradition has a powerful idea of lifelong learning and acknowledging the role of gaining knowledge as a permanent and everlasting task. Knowledge seeking in Islam does not simply occur in the formal education fields by itself but the quest occurs in all the other spheres of the life of the person whereby the intellectual, spiritual and the personal growth are being stimulated. In this paper, the Islamic approach of lifelong learning will be discussed that will center on the teachings of Quran and Hadith that give significance of learning during their lifetime. It explores how these principles can be applied to the contemporary education practice, and how they might be adopted in order to enhance the contemporary lifelong learning strategies. Using the works of classical Islamic scholars and aligning them with the current trends in education all over the world, this study argues about the advantages of the holistic, lifelong learning, which integrates intellectual and moral growth. Moreover, the article examines the contribution of formal and informal learning settings in Islam as it applies to the family, community and workplace settings and their role in the lifelong learning process. The results indicate that integrating the Islamic values into the contemporary education systems may facilitate more inclusive, ethical and sustainable lifelong learning in the 21st century. This article provides the insight on how Islamic doctrines may be transformed to the modern educational paradigms and this way contribute to an education system that appreciates the ongoing growth of mind and soul.

Keywords: *Concept of Lifelong, Learning, Islam, Implications, Modern Education*

Introduction

Lifelong learning has currently become a key component of contemporary education, especially in the world of high speeds which is changing today. In modern education models, the concept of lifelong learning is usually viewed as a personal capacity of a person to constantly develop new skills and knowledge during his or her life so that he or she could be flexible and relevant in his or her personal and professional activities. Nevertheless, lifelong learning is not a new concept. It has been being part of many traditions, such as Islam, which does not only consider knowledge seeking a stage of life but a never-ending sacred duty.

Islam lays great emphasis in the pursuit of knowledge as it is considered as one of the greatest virtues and learning is considered to be an ongoing process throughout life. This is a very strong principle in Quran and Hadith and has been highlighted by the Islamic thinkers throughout

centuries. The Islamic education is not all about the scholastic knowledge but is regarded as a source of spiritual and moral development. According to Islamic teachings, every person should remain in the search of knowledge till the end of his life no matter what his or her social status, age, and sex are.

This paper identifies the Islamic view of lifelong learning discussing major teachings of Quran and Hadith, works of classical Islamic scholars, and how these views can be applied to the contemporary education systems. The paper also aims at connecting the Islamic educational values with the current strategies of lifelong learning in order to come up with a holistic, inclusive and comprehensive approach to education.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key principles of lifelong learning in Islam, and how are they derived from the Qur'an and Hadith?
2. How can Islamic perspectives on lifelong learning be applied to modern educational systems?
3. What role do formal and informal learning environments play in promoting lifelong education in an Islamic context?
4. How can integrating Islamic values into contemporary education enhance the development of both intellectual and moral aspects of learners?

Literature Review:

1. Islamic Teachings on Knowledge:

Acquisition of knowledge has been a primary obligation in Islam. The Quran, which is the main reference of guidance, constantly orders the search of knowledge, in the spiritual and worldly aspect. The revelation that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received was the first one. *"Read in the name of your Lord who created"* (Qur'an 96:1), it has made it the point of departure of a society founded upon knowledge. It is a revelation about the significance of literacy and education, a discovery that would ultimately be interpreted as the foundation of all forms of learning: religious, scientific and philosophical.

The Quran has also verses which emphasize intrinsic value of knowledge. As an illustration, one may cite the verses of the Qur'an 20:114 that supports the idea of life-long learning: *Say, My Lord, increase me in knowledge. On the same note, Quran says, Are those who know equal to those who do not know? (Quran 39:9)*, showing that knowledge is of a higher order in the society. Islamic scholars usually refer to these verses to justify the idea of lifelong learning.

2. The Role of Hadith in Promoting Lifelong Learning:

Besides Quran, the literature of Hadith (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad) also gives additional stress of the lifelong learning. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that *"seeking knowledge is a duty of all Muslims, both men and women (Ibn Majah, 224)"* implying that learning is not an activity done in essence but a mandatory issue to all people irrespective of their social class or gender.

Another interesting Hadith is, *Ibn Battuta, Annals, Seek knowledge to the cradle to the graves*, which stresses the idea of knowledge seeking never ends with age but going on up to the end of the life of an individual. According to the teachings of the Prophet, it is essential to constantly develop intellectually and link it to the moral development. This teaching clarifies that learning is a life long task, which does not only target intellectual accomplishments but also spiritual fulfillment.

3. Islamic Educational Philosophies:

The educational philosophies of classical Islamic philosophers like Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun and Al-Farabi were a fusion of intellectual knowledge and moral growth in addition to spiritual growth.

As an example, Ibn Khaldun in his classic text, *Muqaddimah* (1377), stated that knowledge was crucial in development of a civilization. He contended that education was essential both in individual development and social development and it must be lifelong.

The educational approach adopted by Al-Ghazali as outlined in *his Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) reflects the fact that education must deal with both the intellectual and moral virtues. The aim of education according to al-Ghazali was not merely to gain facts but foster the soul as a way of enhancing the academic learning to lead to the moral life. His writings motivated the Islamic schools especially those that aimed at giving Islamic education an academic orientation.

According to al-Farabi, the author of *The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (1985), education system was based on both intellectual and moral growth. To Al-Farabi, education was not merely a process of cultivating the rationale ability but also cultivating the virtues needed to live a moral and perfect life. His comprehensive concept of education stressed upon the fact that genuine knowledge is one that involves the mind and the spirit, and this principle applies to today when we address the topic of intellectual and ethical training being brought together in education.

4. Global Educational Trends and Lifelong Learning:

Nowadays lifelong learning is the paramount value of learning in the world. According to the report of the *Global Education Monitoring by UNESCO (2015)*, lifelong learning is among the important human rights that should be addressed in the education system and therefore, should make the education systems serve people throughout their ages. The report has highlighted that the education process should not be limited to the institutional or formal education but must also incorporate the informal and non-formal forms of education, the same principle that is reflected in Islamic educational values.

Equally, the efforts by the European Union in lifelong learning emphasize that learning ought to be regarded as an ongoing experience, which can change according to the demands of society and personal ambitions. These new models coincide with the Islamic concept of education that is a life long process whereby people are expected to never stop learning in their lives.

Islamic Perspective on Lifelong Learning:

1. The Qur'anic Foundation for Lifelong Learning:

The Quran is riddled with verses that underscore the significance of knowledge. Besides the verse, which encourages Muslims to always acquire knowledge, which is known as *"Say, My Lord, increase me in knowledge"* (Qur'an 20:114), there is another verse, which states, *"And those who have firmly set their feet in knowledge"* (Qur'an 3:7), that is, intellectual elevation of those who are willing to engage in life long learning.

One more thing that the Quran teaches is to seek knowledge in order to know better the world and the divine. *"He it is who has made for you the night that you may rest therein and the day to see. Verily, in that are signs for people who listen"* (Qur'an 10:67). This verse encourages a person to think about the natural world, which supports the notion that the process of obtaining knowledge does not only concern human studies but also the contemplation of the manifestations of God in nature, which is a never-ending learning process.

2. The Role of Hadith in Lifelong Learning:

Learning does not begin at early childhood in Islam. The famous Hadith *"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave"* (Al-Tabarani) invites the Muslims to seek knowledge at every level of life. This fits the modern focus on lifelong learning which is regarded as necessary to the personal and professional development.

A further significant Hadith is one which reinforces the idea that wisdom, which is derived out of knowledge, is essential in the growth of the individual and the society: *"Whoever Allah wants*

good for, He gives him understanding of the religion” (Sahih Bukhari). This indicates that knowledge does not only apply to learning facts but rather building a wider perspective of life and spiritual maturation.

3. Holistic Education in Islam:

Islamic education is comprehensive because intellectual, ethical and spiritual growth is incorporated in it. The *Ihya' Ulum al-Din, as the work of Al-Ghazali*, pays attention to the concept that the education should purify the soul and transform it into the righteous mode of acting. Knowledge cannot be complete without moral development to him which is relevant to any contemporary education system that is attempting to make, not just a knowledgeable individual but also a citizen who has moral responsibilities.

The entire Islamic education encourages such virtues as honesty, humility, patience, and empathy. Such moral content is necessary to render the individuals who not only give contributions in the society but also exercise the moral values. Islamic education, thus, is not only about impartation of knowledge, but also about building of moral and spiritually conscious society.

Application of Islamic Perspectives to Modern Education:

1. Integration into Contemporary Lifelong Learning Frameworks:

Lifelong learning is coming up as a concept that is of importance in the contemporary world of education, though it is more intellectual in nature and is less career developmental. Including the Islamic lessons on pedagogy in the modern realm of life-long learning, one can ensure that the latter would be dedicated to the moral and spiritual development as well. It is an integrated approach person that enhances the development of not only a competent and knowledgeable individual but also caring and socially responsible individual.

The emphasis of Islamic education on the growth of the soul as well as the intellect can be used to supplement the current frameworks with the introduction of ethical learning. An example of the way to do it is the introduction of ethics-oriented courses into technical and vocational education programs so that these individuals would have a well-rounded sense of responsibility in the professional life.

2. The Role of Technology in Lifelong Learning:

Online platforms and digital resources have led to new opportunities of lifelong learning especially through the digital age. Islam promotes good use of knowledge and technology where ethical standards on their use are emphasized. This is because the Quran teaches humanity to pursue knowledge using the natural phenomena of the world, and technology could be used as such a means, which offers knowledge in different forms (Qur'an 96:1).

The use of technology in the Islamic way makes it responsible. Indicatively, digital learning platforms may be employed to instill both the academic and the Islamic teachings, so that the aspects of learning given ethical aspects are addressed in each context.

3. Promoting Inclusivity in Education:

Islam emphasizes on the fact that education is a right of everyone irrespective of their gender, social status, and age. This view is consistent with the current notions of inclusive education, whereby all individuals are strived to provide them with learning opportunities. Islam promotes equality in education and therefore lifelong learning is available to the society.

An illustrative example is the Islam doctrines that promote the education of men and women, which form the basis of contemporary demands of equality in education. Such values can be used to shape the creation of inclusive curriculum to provide equal access to education opportunities, especially in the case of marginalized groups.

4. Ethical and Moral Development through Education:

The modern education system can also bring responsible citizens that can help the society prosper by incorporation of ethical lessons in the contemporary education systems. The educational policies of focusing on stressing intellectual growth along with the development of the ethical conduct can be shaped using Islamic principles of honesty, empathy, and justice.

The Islamic education can resolve some of the ethical issues that are experienced in the contemporary day education, where the growth of character and morality is valued highly. The ability to incorporate the Islamic values in the modern education systems, is what makes it possible to raise the individuals who are not only skilled in the professional spheres, but also good in their actions.

Findings:

1. The Islamic Teachings provide a complete construct of lifelong learning:

The Quran and the Hadith as the Islamic teachings provide a good framework of lifelong learning which is not limited to the intellectual and ethical world only but also the spiritual one. These lessons may be quite useful regarding the interpretation of the role of the lifelong learning process as the necessity of self-improvement and development.

2. Islamic Education is Holistic:

The Islamic concept of education is holistic in which the mind and the soul are enhanced. This is a practice that is compatible with the present day lifelong learning practices that strive to bring out a balance person who is capable of adapting to the rapidly changing world.

3. Formal learning environments are not always the most important:

Islam does not just promote learning among the formal circles only but also the learning among the informal circles like at home, at the community and at the work place. These environments form part of lifelong learning process since they offer the ongoing intellectual and moral growth.

4. Islamic Values Promote Inclusivity and Ethical Learning:

The inclusion of education in the Islamic religion is facilitated by the holistic perspective of the Islamic religion on education which cuts across genders, age, and position. Moreover, the Islamic values promote the nurturing of ethically responsible persons that will be beneficial in the society.

Conclusion:

The concept of lifelong learning has given a great contribution to the current practices in education through Islam. The Islamic teachings rely on the unending study and development of intellectual and moral virtues. With the implementation of the principles under the system of modern education, the inclusion, moral, and sustainable lifelong learning will become possible. The Islamic values provide a comprehensive approach to managing education that makes the growth and social responsiveness easier since the role of education does not only concern an individual but the whole society.

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