

# **Islam and Philosophy of Education: The Three Approaches**

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## Introduction

The phrase of ‘philosophy of education’ can be misleading in looking for Islamic philosophy of education. Even though this phrase is well-known in educational circles today, it is by no means the case that it can be helpful in finding out the relevant contents in different cultures including the Islamic culture. As Nicholas Burbles (2000) has aptly pointed out the technical phrase of ‘philosophy of education’ referring to an academic discipline is not even common in the European countries let alone the non-European cultures. He holds that in some of the European countries the phrases of ‘educational theory’ and ‘pedagogical science’ are used in order to introduce the themes subsumed under the rubric of philosophy of education. According to him, this gets even more complicated in the case of non-European cultures where the borders of intellectual development and ethical or religious development get blurred and, thus, phrases such as ‘philosophy of faith’ or ‘philosophy of duty’ take the role of introducing what is meant by philosophy of education.

The same difficulty that Burbles refers to is felt in dealing with Islamic philosophy of education. No doubt something as ‘Islamic philosophy’ appeared in the interface of Islamic civilization and the Greek philosophy which paves the ground for looking for Islamic philosophy of education by contemplating on educational views of Muslim philosophers. However, something as anti-philosophy was developed too in reaction to so-called ‘Islamic philosophy’ among Muslim thinkers such as Ghazali. While his views should no doubt be included in Islamic philosophy of education, he explicitly avoids the rubric of ‘philosophy’ for his views. This suggests that we should take a more comprehensive point of view in dealing with Islamic philosophy of education than what the limited term of ‘philosophy’ provides us with.

In what follows, three strands of thought will be introduced as the main features of interface of Islam and philosophy of education. In the first strand, ‘philosophy’ and famous philosophers’ thoughts are explicitly avoided and, instead, a full and exclusive embrace to Islamic scriptures is taken as the key entrance to Islamic educational views. In the second strand, philosophy is taken to be compatible with Islam as a religion and, thus, it is held that ‘Islamic philosophy of education’ can be sought properly under this rubric. Finally, in the third strand, which I am going to show as preferable to the other two, philosophical methods and procedures are used in order to formulate the educational thought introduced in Islamic scriptures. It is worth noting that the difference between the third and the first stand is that while the latter avoids any philosophical thought and terminology, the former embraces philosophical methods even though there is a similarity between the two strands in dealing with the scriptures.

## **The first approach: Inference from Muslim philosophical systems**

In this approach, it is held that religion not only does not contradict philosophy, but also there is a harmony between them because philosophy is trying to use rationality to reach the same truths that religion has introduced by revelation. In this approach, Muslim philosophers' systems of thought are used as a basis for deducing educational points of view. In what follows, in explaining this approach, first an example of a philosophical system is introduced and then its educational implications are articulated.

Muslim philosophers since the beginning of philosophical endeavours in the Islamic civilization have introduced different philosophical systems. There are three main strands in Islamic philosophy. The first one is developed by relying on Aristotle's legacy. The figures who belong to this strand are called peripatetic philosophers including Averroes and Avicenna. The second strand is based mostly on the Platonic tradition which is called the 'Philosophy of Illumination' led by Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1999). Finally, the third strand begins by Mohammad Shirazi (1981) nicknamed as Mulla Sadra and Sadr al-Muta'lehin. He has attempted to provide a synthetic system including the two previous systems as well as the Islamic apologetic. It is worth mentioning that some Muslim thinkers tended more toward mysticism than philosophy and, in fact, they attempted to undermine philosophical endeavour altogether and take the way of mysticism superior to philosophy. What is referred to as 'Islamic philosophy of education' in this first approach is built upon one of the three strands of philosophies and sometimes upon the mystical view. A number of works have been published in recent times in accordance with this approach including Seyed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas (1980/1996) and Toomi al-Sheibani (1394/1985) among others.

### **Philosophical Foundations**

In this part, some examples of ontological, epistemological, and axiological views of the followers of this approach are introduced. Alatas (1980/1996), for instance, in discussing Islamic ontology gets close to mystical metaphysics. Therefore, in Islamic ontology, he puts God at the first level of the hierarchies that the mystics refer to as "Oneness" (ahadiyyah). At this level, God is purely absolute without being determinable in any way whatsoever. The second level of the world is called "the most sacred emanation" (faiz al-Aqdas) of God. This level having some determinations is divided to three levels: the divine solitary level, the divine names and attributes level, and the level of subsistances (aayan sabetah). Finally, the third level of the world has two sub-levels: external objects (aayan kharejiyyah) and the experimental phenomena.

In terms of human nature, al-Toomi al-Sheibani (1394/1985) has relied on the Greek philosophers' opinion that human being is a rational animal. In his view, this philosophical definition of human is acceptable from Islam's viewpoint. In addition, according to him, it is a comprehensive definition that directly or indirectly includes other definitions such as the ones take human as a symbol developing animal (linguists) or as a religious animal

(religious scholars) or as a moral animal (scholars of ethics) or as a social animal having culture or civilization (sociologists).

As for epistemology, in this approach it is held that philosophical or rational thinking is not only compatible with Islamic view but also this sort of thinking ranks higher in Islam. Motahari (Tabatabai & Motahari, 1350/1969, Footnote p. 71), for instance, by criticizing some who hold that Quran talks about the world in scientific and empirical way, believes that the Quran's talk is not limited to this but also includes the philosophical and rational method and that the latter, in fact, ranks a higher level. By mentioning verses from Quran, in which the beings in cosmos are introduced as God's "signs", he expresses that the relationship between God and His signs is like that of face and mirror. Mirror directly refers to the face not in a mediatory way as is the case in, for instance, the relationship between a chair and its carpenter. Therefore, when it is said that the beings in cosmos signify God, it means that they are the manifestations of God's being. According to him, this is a philosophical argument (and not a mystical stance that denies the causal relationship altogether) especially in Sadr al-Mota'lehin's philosophy which shows that the relationship between the effect and the cause is a sort of manifestation; that is to say, the effect is the manifestation of cause itself and dependent on it. Thus, where Quran refers to the beings in the world as God's signs, this should be understood in terms of the philosophical argument that the effect is the direct manifestation of the cause rather than in terms of empirical evidence that by mediation refers to God. Referring to this point, Motahari states:

To sum up, philosophical rationality relying on ontology with regard to the being as being (the same recognition that merely philosophy, not science, is capable of) leads us first and foremost to the existence of God. But empirical and scientific studies lead us to limited, restrained, and contingent beings that are His effects, deeds, dimensions, and manifestations. (Footnote, p. 84).

That is to say, the beings of the world should not be taken as the empirical an indirect manifestation of God but, based on the philosophical understanding of the relation between the effect and cause, as the direct manifestation of God.

As for values, the proponents of the first approach have paid attention to the agreement between philosophical ideas and Islamic viewpoint. The following examples are noteworthy:

Al-Toomi al-Sheibani (1394/1985), in discussing philosophy of ethics and ethical theory of Islam, says that ethics deals with characters or stable states in human soul that issue human moral deeds easily or without reflection. In this regard, Muslim philosophers evidently follow Aristotle. In al-Sheibani's opinion, the ultimate aim of religion and ethics, is achieving individual and social happiness, both in this world and the Hereafter. He acknowledges that some by taking note of the essentiality of fear of God in Islamic ethics have expressed that considering "happiness" as the aim of ethics, following Aristotle, is not compatible with Islamic view, while others take the true and stable happiness, namely the happiness in the Hereafter, as the aim of Islamic ethics. However, in al-Sheibani's opinion, Islamic

viewpoint can comply with what philosophers have said on worldly happiness of humans, as far as it is in the scope of obeying God and fearing Him. Indeed, according to al-Sheibani, ethical rules in Islam are neither merely determined by rationality, as the Mu'tazilites believed, nor merely by Shari'a rules, as the Asharites believed, but they are determined by the criteria of both religion and rationality. Beside these two main criteria, there are numerous sub-criteria in order to determine that a deed is ethical such as: good intention, agreement with religion, rightfulness and justice, advantage or public benefit, obligation to the extent of ability, etc.

Likewise, Alatas (1980/1996) in discussing human happiness in Islamic thought expresses that virtues such as bravery and justice, held by philosophers after Aristotle as virtues, are not inherently enough to bring about a kind of happiness that is not exclusively for this world, but eternal. On the contrary, according to him, the Aristotelian virtues are compatible with Islamic view in so far as they can be integrated into the framework of Islamic value system. Alatas holds that knowing the Lord, in harmony with revelation, is the supreme religious virtue that results from wisdom. Wisdom, be it theoretical or practical, is a religious virtue because God has bestowed it upon the human through religion and it is not merely the result of rationality.

### **Educational implications**

The first approach, with regard to its belief in the possibility of agreement and union between philosophical thoughts and Islamic views, deals with a genuine 'philosophy' of Islamic education. In what follows, by relying on al-Toomi al-Sheibani's work as an example, the content of Islamic philosophy of education in this approach is explored.

In the first approach, not only is it permissible to use the term "philosophy of Islamic education" but it is held that the proper way of developing it is to rely on Muslim "philosophical systems" and deduce from them implications for education. Al-Sheibani (1394/1985) by considering the literal meaning of philosophy (to love knowledge) maintains that the term "philosophy of Islamic education" is consistent. Thus, philosophy of Islamic education, as far as it is a philosophy, possesses the main characteristics of philosophy (such as comprehensiveness, vast prospect, insight, and knowing the ways of applying knowledge) and as far as it is concerned with education, it brings about those characteristics to the domain of education and, finally, being Islamic, it is based on Islamic knowledge and is harmonious to the spirit of Islam.

Al-Sheibani (ibid, p. 30) holds that assuming Islam as the basis in philosophy of education does not prevent us from using other sources for compiling philosophy of education. Of course, these sources will be considered secondary and should be harmonious to the spirit of Islam. Islam and its cultural heritage are the primary sources, but in addition to them cultural and scientific heritage of humanity including philosophical theories and scientific findings of natural sciences and humanities (especially philosophies of education) should be used if they are in accordance with the spirit of Islam. Therefore, the philosophy of Islamic education is always evaluated by indicators such as not being paradoxical, being scientific and

practical, being comprehensive in comparison with new philosophical and scientific findings, being dynamic for change and improvement, being fitted to new findings in knowledge and religious endeavours.

Al-Sheibani (1394/1985) believes that the concept of curriculum, as introduced by the contemporary educational thought, is a new concept. He holds that although in the contemporary Islamic societies educational centres are managed in the flawed traditional style, alien to this new concept, but to Islamic thought such changes are welcome. Now, according to him, we can compile the new principles and characteristics of 'curriculum' by Islamic teachings. The main points of his ideas on this are as follows:

**1- The main characteristics of curriculum from Islam's point of view are as follows:**

I- The ruling of religion and ethics on the curriculum as a whole;

II- Comprehensiveness with regard to different dimensions, such as physical, rational, mental, and social aspects;

III- Balance among the mentioned aspects (in the sense that essential importance is given to different spiritual aspects and religious and the hereafter sciences, but that does not prevent us from paying attention to physical aspects and worldly sciences.);

IV- Attention to fine arts, sports, military education and job skills and teaching foreign languages. Supporting these components was clear in the history of Islamic education as the following evidence indicate: the existence of prominent figures in music such as Farabi; putting emphasis on bowing, riding, and swimming; calling professional work as the holy attempt (Jihad); and the emergence of translation movement in the second century that clearly indicates the high position of learning a foreign language;

V- Attention to individual and local differences and being dynamic in relation to changes. Therefore, although the division of content in Islamic education centres were based on subject matter by using the "logical order", but in fact, because of the mentioned characteristics in Islamic thought, the criterion of content organization was something between the "logical order" and "psychological order". Anyhow, if experience shows that a style is better, since Islam is dynamic, it would not refrain from accepting it.

**The general foundations of curriculum in Islamic education are as follows:**

I- Religious foundation: The main sources include Quran and the manner of the Prophet (sunnah) in the first place and then consensus of religious scholars (ijma'e), analogy in drawing new religious decrees (qeias), general benefits of people (masalih morsalah), and preference of intuitive interests of the scholar (istehsan). Therefore, religious sciences and their tools (such as the principles of Islamic beliefs and Arabic language) and this worldly beneficial sciences (such as philosophy and natural sciences), as far as they are compatible with Islamic thoughts and ethics, are part of the content.

II- Philosophical foundation: What is meant by this is the educational philosophy of Islam derived from religious texts with an independent identity compared to other educational philosophies. This independence

does not prevent it from having similarities to other philosophies of education. For example, there exists a similarity to idealism in the emphasis on spiritual values; to naturalist realism in being realistic in determining educational content; to scholastic realism in accepting the position of divine revelation and rationality in curriculum; to romantic naturalism in attending to individual needs and observing individual freedom; and to pragmatism in the emphasis on experience and solving problems and acquiring benefits.

III- Psychological foundation: Paying attention to the characteristics of physical, mental, emotional, and social development of the students in organizing the content. In Islamic thought, there is no obstacle for accepting and paying attention to these characteristics.

IV- Social foundation: The transition of the heritage of the Islamic society, learning social manners, strengthening the family and other social institutions, are among the issues that should be addressed in determining the content of the curriculum.

**Division of curricula: There are different sorts of division for curricula and Islamic view is open to new suggestions. Here, a division based on educational stages is suggested by al-Sheibani:**

I- The first stage in Islamic education: This stage includes the learning of essential subjects such as memorizing and reading Quran, the principles of religion and ethics, reading, writing and arithmetic, the rules and grammar of Arabic language, reciting moral poetry, calligraphy, the lifestyle of the Prophet, swimming and riding. In addition to these essential subjects, others such as the history of Prophet's wars, giving speeches, social manners, etc. can be added if needed.

II- The advanced stage in Islamic education: After the first stage, one can start a profession or career or, instead, continue with advanced stage that can lead up to acquiring a speciality. Education in this stage has no limits except for benefiting in the world and the Hereafter, suitable to the local needs and the time's findings.



## **The second approach: A purely religious view**

The second strand in Islamic thought that relates to the themes of philosophy of education, though not to its name, takes it for granted that there is an opposition or a basic difference, to say the least, between Islamic view and those of the ancient Greek philosophers as well as mysticism. This sort of view is in fact a continuum and the rejection of philosophical views in it is a matter of degree. Having this continuum in mind, Ghazali (1997) can be considered as a representative of this strand even though his reliance on a particular kind of mysticism makes it difficult to properly classify him into this strand. More recently, some Islamic scholars have supported this view including Jalal al-Din Farsi (1376/1997), Mohammad Reza Hakimi et al. (1400/1974), Ali Ahmad Madkooor (1990) among others. In what follows, first the basic lines of thought in this strand are introduced and then the relevant educational views are addressed. This part concentrates on Madkooor's view as he has authored an entire book on Islamic education.

### **The basic lines of thought**

The proponents of this approach believe that there are crucial differences, and maybe contrasts, between the findings of philosophers, in the realms of ontology, human nature, knowledge, and value, on the one hand, and Islamic viewpoints on the other. This point is addressed briefly below.

Firstly, in relation to ontology, Ali Ahmad Madkooor (1990), among others, holds that, in terms of ontology in Islam, God is the beginning and the end, namely existence is originated from God. Then, the divine truth, in all forms and shapes of existents –tangible or rational- flows through to the lowest of them, and once again this flow returns to the divine truth that the process has been originated from. The world is the manifestation of God, formed by divine plan, will, and management. According to Madkooor, in Islamic viewpoint, the world is divided into two parts of tangible and intangible beings (Shahada and Ghayb). But the tangible manifestations of God are not held as independent beings, as is the case in the technical and analytical endeavours prevalent in sciences and arts, but they are taken as signs of God's knowledge and power and, thus, as a path to get to know Him. The intangible world consists of spiritual beings such as souls, angels, and the Jin. Accordingly, Quran has briefly discussed the intangible world but has not talked about the quality of soul and the creatures of the upper world. Madkooor believes that we should limit ourselves to the borders of Quranic politeness and what is addressed in Quran and do not let our minds wander in what is not addressed.

As for the human nature, as part of ontology, this approach maintains that the image of human in Islam is essentially different from the one that philosophers represent. Madkooor (1990), for instance, believes that while 'nature' (physis), including human nature, in Greek concerns the material things, in Islam the meaning of human 'nature', considering its literal root (tab'e: to bring about an effect), has the connotation that human is the creature of God. The effect of God (Spirit of God) in human is called fitrah. In Madkooor's opinion, the main characteristics of humans in Islamic view are as follows: humans have a divine nature; a binary composition (soul and

body); an equal potentiality for good and evil; and a free choice and responsibility.

Secondly, in terms of knowledge, relying on Ghazali, Madkour (1411/1990) believes that what is meant by knowledge in religious terminology is to know God. This knowledge includes the sciences of nature and history etc., only when they are based on the divine foundation. Thus, one can say that the sources of knowledge are religion and reason, while the primacy is for the former and, thus, religion determines the boundaries of rationality. By citing Ibn Timiyyah, Madkour illustrates the relation between religion and rationality as follows: 1) true rational knowledge cannot be in conflict with a true religious knowledge; 2) a rational knowledge which is in conflict with religion is no doubt wrong and human reason can show this; 3) a true rational knowledge should not be taken as a knowledge outside religion. Thus, a true rational knowledge is both rational (since reason realizes its rightness) and religious (since it states what religion claims).

In regards to the essential or instrumental value of knowledge, Madkour (1411/1990) holds that in Islam a mere subjective knowledge that does not influence the human life and behaviour is worthless. The ultimate goal of knowledge is the fertility of earth and improvement of human life according to the way of the religion (pp. 296-297). In dividing the sciences based on Islam, he puts them in two categories: the sciences related to human beings (such as ideas, history and its interpretations, and politics) and pure sciences (such as physics, chemistry, and biology). He maintains that the former should be acquired by religion and one should not rely and use non-Muslims' findings in that area; such reliance is permissible only for pure sciences.

Finally, in the realm of values, Madkour holds that values are absolute and stable in Islamic viewpoint. Therefore, according to him, moral values should be maintained in human society, be it primal or civilized, underdeveloped or industrial (p. 254). He believes that the source of values is Islamic Shari'a not social agreement, and since the source is definite, then the Islamic values are fixed too so that, for instance, women cannot leave their houses without their husbands' permission; girls are not allowed to come home late at night or marry without their fathers' permission. (Madkour 1407/1987, p. 208)

### **Educational viewpoints**

In the second approach, as a result of the general avoidance from philosophy and the differences held between the intellectual bases of Islam and philosophy, a different view is presented regarding the education. Ali Ahmad Madkour, by specifically paying attention to education, has dealt with this point extensively; therefore, here, we will only cite examples from his works.

Because of the above-mentioned fundamental differences between Islam and philosophy, in this approach, it is held that one cannot and should not use the term "Islamic philosophy of education" in a consistent way; because Islam is a divine religion, while philosophy is a human endeavour and they are not compatible. This is so especially because philosophy, most prominently, has appeared as the religion's rival and has attempted to

respond to the same issues that God has addressed by His omniscience. Based on this confrontation, in order to show the Islamic way in human education, one should pay attention to religious texts, away from polluting religious themes with failed philosophical endeavours. According to Madkour, as a result of severing their links with religion, westerners have appealed to “educational philosophy” or “education theory”, but this cannot be the case among Muslims since for them shari’a is important, neither philosophy, nor theory. In addition, to attempt to express shari’a in the form of philosophy or theory is tantamount to taking the risk (1411/1990, p. 277) of committing contradiction. Therefore, he prefers the phrase of “Islamic way of education” (p. 45). By this term, he refers to a system of truths, criteria, and fixed divine values, on one hand, and sciences and changeable information and skills on the other hand, which are transmitted to the students through educational institutions, so that they would be able to actualize their divine surrogacy on the earth.

Based on Madkour’s opinion, the main features of “Islamic way of education” are as follows:

*Systematic characteristic: The components and elements of Islamic way of education are systematically linked and influence each other. (Of course, it is evident that this feature is not specific to Islamic education).*

*Divinity: The Islamic way of education is part of Islam that God has bestowed on human. The orientation and goal of education is divine and cannot be considered as humane.*

*Monotheism: This is the founding element of Islam and Islamic education that distinguishes it from other educational systems and philosophies. On one hand, monotheism requires that all details of human development or becoming be oriented toward God and, on the other hand, result in human freedom from any kind of bounds.*

*Universality: Islamic education is concerned with all humans in every time and every place. This is so especially because human nature, in Islamic viewpoint, is a stable matter that is not dependent on race, colour, locale and culture.*

*Stability: As the essential truths about God, the world, and humanity are expressed by Islam, a kind of stability emerges in Islam and its educational foundation. The changes in social, economic, educational, and other affairs all happen on the surface and do not disturb the stability. Islamic system is concerned with rules that are based on truths and are manifested in the Islamic way of education. In comparing Islamic and western systems it can be said that western societies have tended more to “change”, while Islam has tended more to “stability”.*

*Comprehensiveness: Islam is from God and, thus, is all-encompassing and comprehensive in the sense that it has everything, and can answer all needs of the human. Of course, this does not prevent us from a give and take relationship to other thoughts but, by giving us the criterion, Islam makes us able to do so.*

*Balance: Human being is a balanced set and Islam is the religion that pays attention to all aspects in a balanced way.*

*Positivity: Islam is the religion of work and practice; it has a positive side and includes a proper design. The way of Islamic education is concerned with designing and using things by the divine religion's criteria.*

*Reality: Islam is not only concerned with subjective thoughts, it is also a realist religion. Thus, Islamic education seeks to realize its ambitions.*

Madkour (1411/1990) believes that the content of curriculum should actualize the goal of Islamic education, namely developing good humans to live on the earth based on the divine shari'a. He introduces three prevalent methods in determining content; evaluating the students' needs; analysing the educational subject; and asking the specialists. Relying on these three methods, he presents the following points in determining the content of Islamic curriculum:

1- Dividing sciences into two categories of religious and worldly is not acceptable. The criterion for deciding about the identity of sciences is the ultimate goal. Therefore, any science that plays a role in developing a good human should be taken as a religious science.

2- In acquiring sciences there are two main rules that should not be broken: A. One should not take anything from non-Muslims regarding beliefs, religion, and political system, etc.; B. Acceptable sources in the above-mentioned cases are merely: Quran, the manner of Islam's prophet (sunnah), consensus (of Muslim religious scholars), and inference (ijtehaad) in the light of Islam's spirit and its clear words.

3- What is called "Islamic philosophy" or "Islamic mysticism" after the third century Hijri (the 9th century) is not compatible with Quran and Sunnah. The primary criterion in selecting the content is the main religious texts.

4- The shari'a sciences, comprising of Quran, sunnah, and fiq (jurisprudence), should rule the determination of content.

5- Sport, in all its forms, is part of Islamic educational content. Physical strength is a necessary condition for the believer to reach the goals set by Islamic education.

6- Arts and literature hold special interpretations about the world and humanity. Therefore, the Islamic arts and literature should manifest such interpretation. In western art and literature, there are works that are compatible with the spirit of Islam, they should be chosen and the rest should be left untouched.

7- Learning Arabic as the language of Quran is necessary even for non-Arab Muslims and should be part of the curriculum. But such education is only successful when it is taught as part of Islamic culture and civilization.

8- Learning foreign languages is also necessary for Muslims, because their communication with others to expand Islam is dependent on knowing their languages. But it is better to teach them after the primary school, because the students have acquired the necessary understanding to know its requirement and it will reach results faster.

9- Learning professions and skills is also very important in Islamic thought, as God when talking about the prophet David, considered “industry” (military) as a “fence” for safety (Anbia: 80). In Islam, contrary to Platonic tradition, the status of a work is not based on its being intellectual or manual but the status originates from the worker (not work) and based on his intention and aim.

10- History and geography are also important in Islamic thought. History is the way to understand God’s traditions on the earth, because history does not comprise solely the events but their interpretation too. Geography is also important in the fertilization of the earth and promoting life on it.

11- The educational content would be different for boys and girls, although there might be similarities. Since the main obligation of women is managing the household and children in a proper way, subject should be determined suitable to such role, and since men’s main task is to work and have a profession, especial attention should be paid to that as well.

12- The principle of linking theory and practice in Islamic education necessitates that experience and thinking be considered together. Regarding this principle and the necessity of gender division in educational content, artificial “workshops” and “laboratories” should be designed for boys and artificial “houses” for girls in order to provide them with relevant practice.

13- In Islam, sciences are divided based on their being essential or instrumental. The former includes shari’a sciences such as Quran and fiq and the latter comprises of sciences such as language, arithmetic, and logic. The former should be taught extensively but the latter should be taught as introduction and to the extent that they are needed.

14- The content should be organized in a way that the introductory discussions of instrumental sciences are taught in the primary school and advanced discussions of instrumental sciences as well as the essential ones, namely shari’a sciences, are taught in advanced and higher education. Referring to Ibn Khaldun, Madkour holds that in advanced and higher education it is necessary that different subjects are taught in a continual way not in a parallel mode to avoid confusion of issues. The fact that the subjects should complete each other still remains correct, but it is suitable in sciences and techniques that come from a common background, for example teaching language is related to literature, Quran, and history but not to mathematics and sciences.

15- The union and unification of Islamic ontology and anthropology necessitates that a complementary relationship exist between human experiences. The most important complementary relationship is between every field and its goal namely making a good human. The fields of educational subjects with their complementary relationships can be considered as follows: a. Shari’a sciences such as Quran, sunnah and fiq; b. Humanities such as

history, geography, and languages; c. Mathematics such as arithmetic, geometry, and algebra; d. Natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, and biology; e. Literature and arts such as music and drawing; f. Sports. Each one of these fields leads to a specific kind of thinking: Shari'a sciences lead to forming a general viewpoint about the existence and life; humanities provide analytical thinking and symbolic style; mathematics forms logical and symbolic thinking; natural sciences help the experimental thinking grow; and literature and arts help zeal and aesthetic sense to grow.

## **The third approach: Philosophy as method and procedure**

A third approach in formulating the Islamic philosophy of education is to use philosophical methods and procedures in order to organize Islamic viewpoints in accordance with the structures of philosophies of education. In order to introduce this approach, it is necessary to point out its difference with the other two approaches. Thus, a brief comparison with the approaches is given before going into the details of the third approach.

### **Comparison with the two former approaches**

The first approach has strengths and weaknesses. The most important strength of this approach is that it maintains the possibility and necessity of dealing with other thoughts. From the Muslim rationalist point of view, findings of rationality are worthy and one cannot ignore them just because they are reached by others. The weakness of this approach is improper conflation of Islamic thoughts with other thoughts. Referring to this point, Motahari shows the importance of being sensitive to this kind of weakness: “in Islamic era, the styles of Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and Khaje Nasir al-Din, which are more Greek, are different from Sadr al-Mota’lehin’s style that is full of inspirations from Quran, Nahjulbalagha, and Imams’ quotes.” (Tabatabayi/Motahari, 1350, vol. 5, Introduction)

This is a good alarm for dealing carefully with ‘Islamic philosophies’. However, nobody is exception from this alarm even Sadr al-Mota’lehin as there are big similarities between his philosophical system and those of other Muslim philosophers who are negatively referred to in the above citation as his philosophy has also similarities with the ancient Greek philosophy. To mention but an example, it is worth noting that Sadr al-Mota’lehin’s philosophy is constructed in the same reason-centred paradigm of Greek philosophy.

On the other hand, the second approach attempts to receive the pure Islamic thought from Islamic texts without conflating them with other thoughts. The positive feature of this approach is its concern with originality and coherence. No doubt, every thought system possesses certain potentialities that should be recognized and fostered. Accordingly, it is reasonable to hold that the Islamic thought system should be recognized based on its own specificities and these specificities be drawn to their final logical results. However, the shortcoming of this approach is that it tries to reach its aim in a closed space. Enclosing itself in a border and sanctioning dialogue with other thought systems is not a tactic that can lead to what the proponents of this approach want, namely reaching the logical results of Islamic thoughts. Colliding with rival thought systems and even some sort of dealings with them is necessary to reach one’s purpose. This necessity results from: 1) the fact that thought systems’ hidden potentials would be revealed when confronted with rivals; and 2) the fact that the other thought systems are not devoid of any truth; and 3) that looking for every shred of truth that exists in other thought systems is necessary to every truth-seeking Muslim. However, the originality-seekers of the second approach kept themselves distant from others so that they sometimes announced that

learning sciences that are not part of Islam is unnecessary or forbidden. For example, Ghazali believed that there is no need to learn natural sciences (Ghazali, 1402/1978, vol. 1, pp. 28-29). Some even go further and forbid learning logic, as it was once a famous saying in the history of Islam that “whoever learns logic commits heresy”. It is interesting to note that this group even announced excommunication for Ghazali since he allowed learning logic.

There are similarities and differences between the third approach and the other two. As far as the comparison between the third and the first approaches is concerned, they are similar as both enjoy the findings of the philosophical world. In both approaches, dealing with the world of philosophy is accepted and considered favourable. Therefore, using the term “Islamic philosophy of education” is permissible in both of them. Meanwhile, there is a difference between these two. The difference is that while the first approach uses the content of other philosophies, the third approach uses merely methodological insights of other philosophies. For example, in the peripatetic Islamic philosophy a lot of the content of Aristotelian philosophy is accepted. This sort of usage of other philosophies puts an Islamic philosophical system at the risk of being amalgamated and becoming incoherent or coherent at the price of modifying Islamic conceptions to be adjusted to the target philosophical system. Even though philosophical methods and procedures are also somehow dependent on some backgrounds, their dependence is not comparable to that of philosophical thoughts or contents. For example, the dialectic methods of Plato and Hegel are used by contemporary philosophers such as H. G. Gadamer and J. Derrida, but the findings of the latter two are quite different from those of the two former philosophers. This shows that the philosophical methods and procedures have a much higher level of independence from the philosophical systems of thought.

As for the comparison between the third and the second approaches, the similarity is that they both rely on the texts that are peculiar to Islam. However, the difference is that in the second approach philosophy is completely avoided, while in the third approach there is a relation to other philosophies and they are used in a certain way, namely in terms of methods. In other words, in formulating the Islamic philosophy it is helpful and necessary to use the tools and methods of philosophers and philosophers of education to organize educational concepts of Islamic texts. Islamic texts, although possessing different educational concepts, do not present them in a structural way, because these texts are in the first place religious texts without having a structure suited to the philosophy of education.

A study which is done in accordance with the third approach is the two volume authored by Khosrow Bagheri Noaparast (2008, 2012a). A case in point in methodological use of other views in this work is William Frankena’s (1996) suggested procedure for analyzing a philosophy of education. In a regressive manner, Frankena suggests a modified version of Aristotelian practical syllogism. In Frankena’s model, one can start from an educational method and ask about the premises that have led to the method as the result of a syllogism. These premises comprise of a factual and a



normative statement. Likewise, one can start from the contents of a curriculum and look for the premises underlying them. Again, a factual and a normative statement are expected to be found out in the premises of the syllogism. Combined to each other, these two steps introduce Frankena's full model. This model is slightly reconstructed by Bagheri Noaparast by adding a further step to the two steps in which the result of syllogism is the aim of education which is again followed from the combination of a factual and a normative statement. He has used this model in a progressive manner. In this manner, being converse to the regressive direction, one starts from the factual and normative premises in order to get the relevant results. A brief account of the Islamic philosophy of education suggested by Bagheri Noaparast is reported below.

### **Foundations of Islamic philosophy of education**

**First, ontological characteristics of Islamic view are as follows:**

**The universe is not exclusively natural.**

**God is at the highest level of the universe.**

**The universe has a teleological characteristic oriented by God.**

**The biological life is only the lowest level of life being ascended to higher levels of life.**

**The ascending levels of life are toward God and associated by self-flourishing.**

**God is the basic good and the basis of goodness.**

**Anthropological foundations are as follows:**

**Human is a unified whole comprised of the soul and the body.**

**Human has an intuitive knowledge of God.**

**The reason can provide the human with reliable truths.**

**Human agency makes it possible to talk about human actions and individual identity.**

**Interaction among humans leads to collective action and identity.**

**There are limitations for humans within which they acquire opportunity for action.**

**There are ten epistemological foundations of which the first five refer to the known and the rest refer to the knower. They are as follows respectively:**

**Knowledge has an explorative nature.**

**True knowledge has a correspondence to reality.**

**Knowledge has different levels.**

**True knowledge has stability.**

**Knowledge has unity as well as plurality parallel to its different levels.**

**Creativity is involved in knowledge development.**

**Knowledge is a response to human needs.**

**There are different levels of relation between knowledge and human needs.**

**Knowledge has a dynamic process.**

**Knowledge has a conventional dimension.**

**Finally, the axiological characteristics are as follows:**

**Values have a subjective aspect in addition to the objective aspect.**

**There are two sorts of values: absolute and relative.**

**The nature has an instrumental value for humans.**

**The human has a profound dignity.**

**The human has a profound freedom.**

**Justice is the most important social value.**

**Justice is completed by beneficence.**

**Aesthetic values are partly subjective and partly objective.**

### **Educational implications**

The final aim of Islamic education is achieving a pure life (hayat tayyebah). This aim is a comprehensive account of the ideal human life comprising of the dimensions of the physical, the thought and belief, the tendency, the will, the action both individual and collective, and the aesthetic. The pure life requires health and strength in the physical dimension; truth in the thought dimension; ethical control of inclinations in the tendency dimension; a will to goodness in the will dimension; good actions in the individual realm; richness, sanctity, justice, and beneficence in the social realm; and finally the transcendence of human aesthetic taste. This aim can lead us to decide about the curriculum and what to be taught.

As for the basic concept of education, given the human agency in the Islamic view, education in the official sense needs to be understood in terms of an imbalanced ‘inter-action’ between the teacher and the students; as well as a balanced ‘inter-action’ among the students. That is to say, in any case, a student’s agency should seriously be taken into account rather than being repressed and, thus, a student should be taken as the other side of an interaction rather than being reduced to a passive and recipient entity. This is because, according to Quran, people’s real identity is what they make by their actions:

Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; That man can have nothing but what he strives for; That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight: Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete; That to thy Lord is the final Goal (Quran, 53: 38-42).

Accordingly, on the one hand, people being agents make their identities by their actions through inter-actions and, on the other hand, authentic, cultivating or educational actions are the actions that their genus is good and Godly and, thus, are “ended” toward God as the final goal of the universe. “Ended”, rather than necessarily literally “intended”, since sometimes “God” as a name, and a perceived bad name, is deliberately avoided by some people but in the real fact they are unwittingly striving toward God. The criterion here is the nature of their actions. Thus, getting Godly is the real essence of self-flourishing or education in the Islamic view. This point is referred to by the concept of rabb (literally ‘Lord’) and its derivatives in the Quran. Rabb is a Lord who does care about what He owns and this relationship leads to the flourishing of people. It should be noted that the flourishing of humans by the Lord is suited to the human’s making; a making that leads to human agency. Thus, contrary to the usual association held between Islamic education (and religious education in general) and

indoctrination, Islamic education cannot be compatible with indoctrination as far as it deals with a real agent. These important points of Islamic education are addressed in a dialogue between Abraham and his father in the narration of Quran that is worth quoting here:

And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham's story. Behold, he said to his father and his people: "What worship ye?" They said: "We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them." He said: "Do they listen to you when ye call (on them), or do you good or harm?" They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do)." He said: "Do ye then see whom ye have been worshiping, Ye and your fathers before you? For they are enemies to me; not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds." (26: 70-77)

The uncritical reliance on what is received from fathers, namely the tradition, which is the real essence of indoctrination, is rejected by Abraham. In addition, as the last verse indicates, not only is it the case that believing in the Lord should be reasonable but also the Lord's relationship to the human should be flourishing to them.

There are different Islamic educational concepts that should be subsumed under the basic concept of getting Godly, on the one hand, and should be understood in the context of human agency on the other. Some of these concepts, mostly used in the Quran, are as follow: ta'lim (instruction) [3:79], tafaqquh (deep understanding) [9:122], tafakkor (thinking) [34:46], and taddob (taking good manners), and tazkiah (removing bad manners and inner states) [91:9]. Since the humans need to have an authentic action to make their identity properly as to leading to the final goal of the universe, then they need to be taught (ta'lim) about it; and since they are going to build "their" actions upon their views, they should deeply understand (taffaqquh) what they are taught or read and think (taffakor) about them; they also need to realize the proper manners or the sorts of good actions that need to be done (taddob) and refrain from having bad manners and inner states (tazkia).

Al-Attas (1980/1996) has stated that the word rabb and its derivative rububiyya are short of showing the real essence of Islamic education. His argument is that these words refer to bodily growth rather than knowledge being important in education. Instead, he has taken the Islamic concept of adab (literally 'good manner') and taddob as an adequate candidate to include knowledge and action. Thus, he holds that ta'dib (literally: providing someone with a good manner) can show all dimensions of Islamic education. However, as Bagheri Noaparast (2012b) has shown, knowledge is not a necessary element of adab as it is used in the Islamic texts; rather one can say that wherever adab refers to knowledge it refers merely to a moral knowledge. This indicates that ta'dib refers mainly to moral education and cannot include teaching and education in the general sense that they are used today. Contrary to al-Attas's claim, Bagheri Noaparast by appealing to the word rububiyya has suggested the following definition for Islamic education:

Education is an interactive process between the teacher who has a strong relation to God (rabbani) and the pupil in which pupils know God as the

Lord (rabb) and choose Him as their own Lord and try to build a relation to God (and become ribbi) by acquiring a healthy and stable body, knowledge, elegant emotions, and responsible and capable action. (p. 168)

The above-mentioned basic concept of Islamic education has a vital role to play in inspiring all educational endeavors. Other than this basic concept, there are some educational principles that should guide the educational interactions. These principles are derived from the above-mentioned foundations by using Frankena's model. Thus, the principles are divided into three types of anthropological, epistemological, and axiological. Because of the limited space of this article, the principles are merely listed below.

The first type of principles is anthropological. With regard to the relevant foundations, the following principles are derived:

- 1- Simultaneous change in outer and inner dimensions.
- 2- Reviving the innate knowledge about God.
- 3- Rational thinking.
- 4- Responsibility development
- 5- Social 'inter-action'
- 6- Duties fitted to capabilities

As for the epistemological principles, regarding the relevant foundations, the following principles are derived:

- 1- Relationship with the subject of study
- 2- Reliance on evidence
- 3- Comprehensiveness with regard to knowledge
- 4- Reliance on truths
- 5- Hierarchical monism-pluralism
- 6- Hypothesis development
- 7- Relationship to the needs and problems
- 8- Comprehensiveness regarding human needs
- 9- Continuous critique
- 10- Suggesting new divisions for knowledge

Finally, with regard to the axiological principles, the following are suggested:

- 1- Developing an understanding of the conventional aspects of values.
- 2- Developing an understanding of the hierarchy of values.
- 3- Developing skills and professional ethics.
- 4- Maintaining and promoting human dignity.
- 5- Developing freedom
- 6- Providing educational justice
- 7- Promoting beneficence
- 8- Transcending aesthetic appreciation

## Conclusion

Islamic philosophy of education has been introduced under different names and contents. There are at least three approaches in this regard. In the first approach, it is held that not only Islam does not contradict with philosophy, but also there is a harmony between them because philosophy uses rationality to reach the same truths that religion has introduced by revelation. In this approach, Muslim philosophers' systems of thought are used as a basis for deducing educational points of view. The second approach relates to the themes of philosophy of education but not under this name. This approach takes it for granted that there is an opposition or a basic difference between Islamic view and philosophical views derived from the ancient Greek philosophy under the rubric of Islamic philosophy. The first approach embraces rationality by appealing to different philosophical views but its originality in terms of Islamic views remains a real concern. On the other hand, the second approach obsessively deals with originality in terms of Islamic views but is pessimistic to philosophical thought. In the third approach, at stake is to combine the strengths of the two first approaches namely rationality and originality. In formulating the Islamic philosophy of education, the third approach uses philosophical methods and procedures in order to organize Islamic viewpoints in accordance with the structures of philosophies of education. Using Frankena's model in a progressive way, a structure is suggested for Islamic philosophy of education including the basic concept of education as well as ontological, anthropological, epistemological, and axiological foundations and principle for guiding educational activities. According to the suggested basic concept, education is the process of getting Godly in which an interactive relationship is involved between the teacher who has a strong relation to God (rabbani) and the pupil in which pupils know God as the Lord (rabb) and choose Him as their own Lord and try to build a relation to God (and become ribbi) by acquiring a healthy and stable body, knowledge, elegant emotions, and responsible and capable action.

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