Chapter 1
Islamic Education Today and Yesterday:
Principal Themes and their Potential to Enlighten Western Education

Terence Lovat
University of Newcastle, Australia

ABSTRACT

The chapter will offer a literature review of principal themes to be found in contemporary and earlier sources concerned with distinctive features of Islamic education. It will be found that, among a number of themes, those concerned with the teacher-student relationship and the holistic balance between intellectual and spiritual/moral ends stand out as dominant. Explicit in much contemporary literature and implicit in some earlier sources lies a critique of Western education as more instrumental and so narrower regarding these two features. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the distinctive contribution that Islamic education can make to a Western education contemporaneously in search of a renewed holism and fortified moral component.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking at a seminal gathering of Muslim educators in Saudi Arabia in 1977, Syed Muhammad al-Attas (1979) noted the dilemma facing Muslim education everywhere at the time, namely that Muslims were at risk of losing the essence of Islamic education. So what was this essence, in his view? He spoke mainly of

two things: first, the central importance of the nature of the relationship between teacher and student, one characterized as close, personal and loving, so reflecting the role of the teacher as standing in the place of God in the student's formation; and, second, the need for balance between intellectual and broader developmental aims, especially those around moral and spiritual formation. Both of these essential features of Islamic education were seen as being under threat from the dominance of Western educational priorities, ones that were affecting Muslim education both directly in Western settings but also through Western influence in Muslim countries. The inference was that Western educational assumptions are built around more instrumentalist notions of teacher-student relations and more pragmatic, outcomes-based aims rather than those pertaining to holistic human achievement, both of which run counter to the essence of Islamic education. In a word, Islamic education was conceived of as being principally a form of holistic moral education, to be seen in the distinctive ambience of teacher-student relations and the balancing of intellectual with moral and spiritual ends. These principal features can be found as persistent themes among Muslim scholars, today and yesterday, addressing Islamic education's distinctiveness. They are also features that persistently arise in Western education reforms striving to overcome the narrow instrumentalism around which al-Attas's critique is focussed. Among these reforms are those centrally concerned with quality teaching and modes of moral education.

Islamic Education Today: Principal Features

Qais Faryadi (2015) refers to the essence of Islamic education as one:

… based on values and character development. As educators, we are duty bound to be attentive to the needs of students and to help develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills so that they can shape their future meaningfully. Muslim instructors must understand the true meaning of how students learn … What is the process of moral development in our classrooms? (p. 51)

In other words, Islamic education is morally grounded, holistic and prioritizes the individual learner, rather than being overly concerned with standardized outcomes as ends in themselves, again all posited in contrast to what is seen as the dominant Western priorities. Faryadi regards education as a tool that, above all, serves as an instrument for God's plan for the individual to be dispensed. Midst this process, the teacher stands in the place of God, expressing the essence of God's love for the individual in the form of respect and mutual regard. In this relationship, the teaching-learning process is necessarily facilitative and collaborative, rather than hierarchical:

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/islamic-education-today-and-yesterday/234909

Related Content

The Use of Faith in Legislative Decision-Making: Bill Sponsorship and Religious Liberty
 (2022). *Faith-Based Influences on Legislative Decision Making: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 227-259).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-use-of-faith-in-legislative-decision-making/293070

Spiritual Knack Model: A Model of Workplace Spirituality
Gurvinder Ahluwalia (2022). *Handbook of Research on Integrating Spirituality in Modern Workplaces (pp. 206-230).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/spiritual-knack-model/298182

Becoming 'Multi-Racial': The Young Women's Christian Association in Kenya, 1955-1965
Eleanor Tiplady Higgs (2021). *Research Anthology on Religious Impacts on Society (pp. 380-400).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/becoming-multi-racial/259619

Is It Practical to Utilize AI-Powered Chatbots in Halal Marketing Communications?
Muhammad Dharma Tuah Putra Nasution, Endang Sulistya Rini, Beby Karina Fawzeea Sembiring Sembiring, Amlys Syahputra Silalahiand Cut Kesuma Pahlufi (2023). *Strategies and Applications of Islamic Entrepreneurship (pp. 34-55).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/is-it-practical-to-utilize-ai-powered-chatbots-in-halal-marketing-communications/331143

Religious Tourism in Galicia: The Case of El Camino de Santiago
María del Mar Rodríguez Domínguezand Mercedes Vila Alonso (2019). *Handbook of Research on Socio-Economic Impacts of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage (pp. 86-103).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/religious-tourism-in-galicia/210780