

Full Length Research

An Investigation of Teacher-Student Relationship in Islamic History of Education

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This research paper intended to explore the nature of relationship between teachers and students in Islamic history of education. The research was triggered as a result of investigation that highlighted disappointing teacher-student relationship in contemporary education system. According to the nature of subject matter descriptive and qualitative research method was applied. The study established that teacher-student relationship had been given an astonishing milieu in Islamic history and was considered one of the core causes for education par excellence. This relationship was based on care, sympathy, mutual understanding, cooperation and common respect. It was concluded that this healthy relationship enhanced class participation, confidence, critical thinking, research and oral communication skills including in areas of interpersonal skills and personality development of the students. The research therefore recommended to establish healthy relationship among students and teachers by seeking guidance from Islamic history of education since it was perceived a means to improve quality of education, and to equip learners with additional competencies.

Key words: Relationship, teacher-student, Islamic history, Islamic education, contemporary education

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INTRODUCTION

In oxford dictionary the term 'relationship' refers to "the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected". In an educational context, 'relationship' expresses the connection of communication, behavior and understanding between teacher and student.

Educationists believe that teacher-student relationship is the most influential element within the learning process as "It has immense effects on students' learning, schooling experience (Liberante, 2012) as well as on the behavioral adjustment" (Urooj, 2013). According to (Ulwan, 2000), psychologists, sociologists and educationists are agreed upon forming close relationship

between teacher and student to develop the scientific, moral and psychological aspect of education. Therefore an appropriate relationship plays the cardinal role in the students' learning. On one hand an effective relationship facilitates the teacher in teaching process, on other hand it grooms the students to develop their interest in studies.

Unfortunately, the relationship between teachers and students has been found inadequate in present-day education. The researcher in his M.S research conducted a survey to explore the degree of relationship between teachers and students and concluded that the relationship among them was unsatisfactory (Zulqarnain, 2014). This unhealthy relationship prompted the

researcher to explore the teacher-student relationship in Islamic history of education. Secondly, it is an established fact that strong and positive relationship promotes quality of education and equips the learners with additional skills. It was therefore hypothesized by the researcher that one of the secrets of Muslims' ideal education system was healthy teacher-student relationship which played an important role in producing such great men of knowledge who left an immense influence in the history of knowledge over the centuries. Therefore this study is designed to find out the teacher-student relationship in Islamic history of education. Exploring teacher-student relationship in Islamic history would provide an opportunity to critically examine and improve the relationship in contemporary education system.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Overall, this study intended to investigate the teacher-student relationship in golden age of Muslims' education. However, the study intended to accomplish the following particular objectives: (1) to discover the nature of relationship in Islamic history of education and its impact on teaching learning outcomes; and (2), to examine the relationship in contemporary education in context of Islamic history of education and (3), to establish the perception that strong and positive relationship was the secret of Muslims' best education which on one hand enhanced (a) class participation, (b) confidence, (c) critical thinking, (d) creativity, (e) personality development, and (f) oral communication skills of the students while on the other hand provided an opportunity to the teachers to accomplish the educational goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Muslim educationists laid a great emphasize to form strong positive relationship between teacher and student. Some of them wrote specific books on nature of relationship while others made particular chapters in their books. *Tazkirat-ul-Samey-wal-Mutakallimby Ibn-e-Jamayah*, *Talim-ul-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum* by *Burhan-ul-Islam al-Zarnuji*, are famous books written on the manners of teacher and student with respect to acquiring knowledge. Likewise Imam Ghazali in his famous book *Ihya-ul-Uloom* wrote the manners of knowledge for both; teacher and student.

In Muslim education system, every teacher and student was acquainted with one another at an intimate level (Moes). The relationship between teacher and student in Islamic education, even at primary level has been found better than the today's relationship at post graduate level in Europe. The reason was that, education was not merely to deliver knowledge but also to develop all

necessary skills in the students and it was impossible without establishing personal relationship between teacher and students (Murad, 1985). This marvelous relationship developed intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual and materialistic capabilities of students which led them towards outstanding educational progress.

Teachers' Relationship with Students

Forming strong and positive teacher-student relationship has been a distinguished quality in Muslim education throughout the history. Every teacher was supposed to establish personal relationship with his students. For instance: In the time of second Caliph of Islam (Hazrat Umar R.A), four thousand students were studying under the supervision of Hazrat *Muaz bin Jabal* (R.A) and he established personal relationship with every single student (Murad, 1985).

Tashka Prasad has drawn a sketch of teacher's relationship with the students in Islamic history that teacher had pure intention, treated students like his own children; condemned vices and unseemly behavior, always began with the most important and encouraged continuously for advanced learning. His words matched with his actions; there was not too much joking, not getting angry and the teachers encouraged for asking questions and avoided the egotistic disputation. He did not stuck advanced students with easy stuff, planned his lessons in advance, behaved equally with students and used to get ready to fulfill all needs of students (Moes).

Following points provide a brief sketch of teachers' relationship with their students.

Understanding of Students' Psychology

Students differ from one another in capabilities, talent and level of understanding. Thus a best teacher always teaches his students by keeping in view their aptitudes and level of competence. (Mustafai, 2010) emphasizes the psychological understanding of students and stresses that an educational system should be designed in accordance with the capabilities, needs, interests, hobbies and emotions of the students. In Islamic education system "A teacher was instructed to examine the abilities of student in order to behave with him accordingly" (Shalbi, 1999). It was essential for a teacher to be acquainted with the caliber and absorbing level of the students. Overburdening and pushing the pupils beyond their capacity was absolutely condemned by Muslim educationists. In this connection Al-Ghazali stated the fruits of proper and harms of improper feeding that "to feed someone with the right food is to give life; to burden someone with what is not right can only cause ruin". Therefore teacher must avoid bringing them to a level of

knowledge that they cannot absorb (Nofal, 2000). *Ibn-e-Jamayah* wrote that the teacher was expected to impart his student such explanation of the text which was according to his intellect (Kanani, 2004).

Counseling and Guidance

Muslim teacher was very careful about his students and used to guide them in both: curricular and co-curricular activities. *Bu Ali Sina* stated that it was the responsibility of teacher to examine the capabilities of student and suggest him suitable subjects. *Asfahani* emphasized on the same point that a teacher should choose the intelligent students for his discipline with such care as one chooses the person for the marriage of his daughter (Shalbi, 1999). A number of examples could be seen that once a student chose a discipline and teacher guided him towards another and later he became prominent scholar of that particular discipline. For instance, Imam Bukhari, a renowned scholar of hadith, first attended the classes of Muhammad bin Al-Hassan but was guided later by his teacher to join the discipline of Hadith sciences. He, on his teacher's advice changed his discipline and became a distinguished scholar of hadith (Shalbi, 1999).

Behavior with Students

Muslim teachers equally behaved with their students irrespective of their richness and poverty. It was an amazing fact that most of the renowned scholars in Islamic history belonged to poor financial background. (Shalbi, 1999) has quoted a number of scholars who were very poor but affectionate behavior of teachers polished their talent and enabled them to make marvelous contribution in the history of knowledge. For instance, *Abu Tamam* Al Tai belonged to a poor family but adequate behavior of teachers made him a famous poet. Imam Shafi was an orphan and his mother was even unable to provide him pen and paper. His teacher (Imam Malik) paid him special attention and he became third great jurist of Islam. A great Muslim philosopher and Sufi Al-Ghazali was very poor but caring behavior of his teacher *Al-Juvini* made him such a great scholar that he earned the title of "Hujjat-ul-Islam" (Proof of Islam). It was often observed that the teachers by themselves helped their students so that they could continue their education without any interruption. Imam Abu Yousuf belonged to extremely poor family due to which he did not attend the lectures regularly. When his teacher (*Imam Abu Hanifa*) came to know, he took his financial responsibility on his own shoulders and continued to support till the completion of his education. Later Abu Yousuf became one of the great pillars of *Hanafi* school of thought (Shalbi, 1999).

The lenient behavior of teacher encourages the student to take interest into studies (Sheikh, 1984). Muslim

teacher was a model of sympathy who always behaved politely with the students. The principle behind this was the obedience of Holy Prophet as he instructed the teachers to do so. For example, Hazrat *Abu Saeed Khudri* used to say 'welcome' to the seekers of knowledge. He said that, we are advised by Holy Prophet to teach and treat you with respect (Ibn-e-Qattaan, 1997).

Appreciation and Reward

Appreciation helps the students in building up the level of confidence and to achieve excellence in education. It is established by the educationists that the students who are continuously pursued, compete their classmates and produce better results. Muslim teachers used to encourage and appreciate outstanding students on excellent achievements. *Ibn-e-Jamayah* wrote about the methodology of encouraging students that a teacher should encourage his students by reciting verses of Holy Quran, traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), telling different events and couplets showing the excellence of scholars and that the scholars are inheritors of prophets (Kanani, 2004). According to Al Ghazali, the student who is obedient to his teacher, having good morals and shows an excellent performance in academia, should be "honored and praised in public so as to be encouraged and to incite others to imitate him" (Nofal, 2000). Different methods were used to appreciate the students in Islamic education. Sometimes, students had to ride on the camels and the people throw almonds and walnut on them, while sometimes they were awarded scholarships and cash prizes (Shalbi, 1999).

Concept of Punishment

Muslim educationists had different opinions regarding punishment however the concept of unnecessary beating has been absolutely rejected by all of them. A conditional and minor punishment was allowed as an utmost step, subjected to failure of all remedial measures. The purpose of punishment was to make the students disciplined and develop good morals.

Ibn-e-Khaldun was not agreed even with the conditional and minor punishment. He was of the view that punishment produced negative effects and prompted a student to become rebel from the studies. According to him, the punishment stops student's learning, personality development, (Nadvi, 1995), develops habit of lying and deceiving others. These bad habits increase day by day and ultimately ruin the life of child (Shalbi, 1999). According to Al-Ghazali, a teacher should avoid the punishment to his level of best. If a student commits mistake, teacher should ignore it first. If he commits the same mistake again the teacher should call him separately and advise him not to do so. In case of failure of counseling he can slightly punish the student (Nofal,

2000). Sheikh *Ibn-ul-Ikhva* wrote about the manners of punishment that a student should not be punished with such stick which could fracture the bone and not with that, which may not effect. Moreover a teacher should beat such parts of body where there is no possibility of breakage (Fazl-e-Ilahi). *Mufti Taqi Usmani* refers the methodology of *Ashraf Ali Thanvi* in case of punishment. He was of the view that parents should not punish the child soon after the commitment of mistake because at that time they would exceed the limits because of anger. So when the situation went away, they could punish the child by showing an artificial anger. In this way they will not exceed the limits and purpose of punishment will also be fulfilled (Usmani, 2010).

Students' Relationship with Teachers

It was the distinguished quality of Islamic education system that Muslim students formed strong personal and spiritual relationship with their teachers and considered it an act of virtue. They believed that the failure of such type of relationship would lead towards unprofitable knowledge. Therefore they developed strong positive relationship based on care, obedience, trust, and respect. In *Sufism*, the relationship between *Sheikh* (Master) and his *Murid* (pupil) could be seen amazing as it seems sometimes stronger than that of relationship of a man with Allah Almighty. The reason was that the *Murid* thought that the failure of such nature of relationship with his Sheikh will cause the failure of a student towards Allah Almighty (Alkanderi, 2001).

Following few points reflect students' behavior with the teachers in Islamic history of education.

Etiquettes of Learning

Muslim scholars laid a great emphasize on etiquettes of acquiring knowledge. According to Hazrat Abu *Am'r bin Ula*, there are five steps of acquiring knowledge: The first step is to be silent, second is listening with concentration, third is good questioning, fourth is memorizing by heart and fifth is preaching to the person capable of" (Qasim, 2011). An ideal example could be seen in the time of Holy Prophet PBUH that when he used to teach the companions, they were accustomed to listen with such concentration if the birds were sitting on their heads and they will fly away by minor movement. (Asif, 2004) stated that When Hazrat Imam Malik used to teach the traditions of Holy Prophet PBUH, the students looked like statues and only the voice of their breaths could be heard. (Undlasi, 1977) quoted the advice of Hazrat Husain to his son: O my son! Try to learn instead of talking in the company of scholars. He further said that just like the etiquettes of silence, etiquettes of listening should also be acquired.

Trust in Teachers

Muslim students trusted their teachers and believed that they always thought for their better future. (Naqshbandi, 2009) quoted a simile that a student should be in front of his teacher just like a patient in front of doctor. He must share all of his affairs, problems and issues with the teacher. A number of examples could be seen in Islamic history which reflects the students' trust in their teachers. It was often observed that a teacher advised a student to change his discipline and he left his personal opinion by trusting his teacher. After sometime he saw the consequences of his trust and became an authority in that discipline (Shalbi, 1999).

Behavior with Teachers

Teacher in Islamic education was not merely responsible to inculcate knowledge but was equally responsible to guide students in all affairs. This care of teacher demanded the pupil, in response, that he should respect the teacher, give him high status and behave with him like his own father (Nofal, 2000). Hazrat Ali (R.A) explained the etiquettes of behaving with the teacher that whenever you meet with a scholar, first greet him separately than others, sit in front of him obediently, don't imply with hands, don't blink the eyes, don't argue with him and don't tease him by asking (un-necessary) questions (Undlasi, 1977). Moreover a scholar should not be asked much questions, should not be embarrassed on answer, not be pursued if he is tired, not be searched his secrets and faults, his excuse should be accepted in case of mistake and the nation should fulfill his needs until he protects the religion of Allah Almighty (Ghazali). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said "Scholars are inheritors of Prophets" (Dawd, 2009). Some scholars argued with this hadith that to talk with Holy Prophet (PBUH) in a loud voice was prohibited likewise one should not talk with a scholar in loud voice. (Naqshbandi, 2009) says that a teacher should not be called saying 'you' but be called by saying 'O my leader, O my leader'. Muslim educationists also emphasized to behave adequately with the relatives of teachers. (Naqshbandi, 2009) writes that it was necessary for a student to treat with the relatives of teacher with the manners of love and respect.

Obedience and Humbleness

Obedience and humility was considered primary qualities of a student in Islamic education. Non obedient and egoistic attitude had been absolutely condemned by Muslim Scholars. It was established by Muslim scholars that acquiring knowledge is not possible without obedience and humbleness. Therefore Muslim educationist stressed upon the students to be obedient

and humble. According to Al-Ghazali, student must obey the instructions of teacher solemnly (Naqshbandi, 2009). He further said that knowledge was enemy of arrogance therefore a student should be a model of humbleness and must avoid even little kind of arrogance. According to him a student should regard his teacher's opinion up to the most level and anyone who gives priority to his opinion against the teacher, he lost. Student has no right to argue in front of teacher as it is harmful for him. He explains this phenomenon by quoting the example of Hazrat Musa and Hazrat *Khidr* that Hazrat Musa could not show patience on the actions of Hazrat *Khidr* which ultimately separated their ways.

Respect

One of the distinguished qualities of Muslim student was his respectful behavior towards his teachers. Imam Ghazali was of the view that a student should respect his teacher more than his parents. He argued that parents brought him in this mortal world while the teachers made him immortal through education (Shalbi, 1999). (Naqshbandi, 2009) states that Hazrat Ali said that he was slave of a person who taught him even a single word if he wanted to sell me he could, if he wanted to free him, and if he wanted to make him slave he could do so. Hazrat *Shobah* used to say that the person from whom I heard a single hadith I am his slave (Undlasi, 1977). Sheikh *Sadi* said if anyone wanted his son to be religious scholar, should respect the scholars. If his son would not become scholar, his grandson will definitely become scholar (Naqshbandi, 2009). The phenomena behind this, was the belief that Student would not get fruit of knowledge without respecting teacher (Naqshbandi, 2009). Therefore students showed utmost respect towards their teachers and sometimes adopted the teacher's name as a part of their name (Bhatti, 2010).

The Holy Prophet (PUBH) advised his followers to respect and behave with the scholars politely. He was reported to have said that respecting an elder Muslim, religious scholar, *hafiz-e-Quran*, righteous king, and teacher was just like respecting the Allah Almighty (Naqshbandi, 2009). He gave high position to a teacher by saying that there were three fathers of you: one who brought you from extinction to being, second who gave you his daughter, and third who gave you knowledge (Bhatti, 2010). In accordance with the traditions of Holy Prophet (PUBH), Muslim scholars established such unique examples of respecting teachers which had never been seen in the history. For instance, Imam Shafi, a great jurist of Islam, used to turn the pages of paper slowly that the teacher could not listen its voice (and get disturbed) (Naqshbandi, 2009). Once Imam Ahmad bin *Hanbal* leant during discussion, by hearing the name of his teacher sat straight and said it will be bad that the name of elders (scholars) come and we sit by

underpinning (Naqshbandi, 2009). Furthermore he, due to the behavior of respect, did not say the name of his teacher and used to tell about him with surname. Once Hazrat *Zaid bin Sabit* offered a funeral prayer then Hazrat *Ibn-e-Abbas* came to him and held the paddle of his horse. *Hazrat Zaid* said "O, brother of Holy Prophet leave it" (as you are more respectful person). In return, he replied we are ordered to treat the scholars like this (Undlasi, 1977). Caliph *Haroon Rashood* sent his son to Imam *Asmai* for studies. Once he visited him and saw his son pouring the water on his feet during ablution. *Haroon* said I had sent my son for training, he replied he is doing same. *Haroon* said what should be if you order him to pour water with one hand and by other hand he washes the feet (Naqshbandi, 2009).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study was designed to discover the teacher-student relationship in Muslims history of education. Descriptive and qualitative method was used for the collection and analysis of data collection. A vast amount of previously published and parallel literature including research articles, periodicals, theses, research reports and books of Islamic history of education were thoroughly reviewed. Secondary sources including Internet, library and magazines etc. were also pulled in after careful assurance of their validity and reliability. PhD scholars, professors of history and Islamic education were consulted whose guidance and opinions added a significant value to the recommendations and endorsed the findings of paper.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on above findings, the study concluded that formation of healthy and personal relationship between teachers and students was considered an indispensable element for successful teaching-learning process in Islamic history of education. Secondly, the relationship was based on pure intention, respect, trust, care, mutual understanding and cooperation. The teacher was not merely responsible to deliver knowledge but was equal responsible for intellectual, materialistic, and spiritual development of the students. Therefore teacher's relationship with the students was based on guidance, counseling, encouragement, care, appreciation, development of good morals and creating a friendly environment. Thus the student in response, used to behave with his teachers in terms of respect, trust, honor, humbleness, and obedience. The author therefore recommends that head of institutions should take guidance from the Islamic history of education in order to establish strong positive relationship between teachers

and students. The research therefore endorses to establish strong and positive relationship among students and teachers by taking guidance from Islamic history of education. It would be helpful in improving quality of education, equipping learners with additional skills as well as making the educational process enjoyable.

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