

Teacher's Qualities, Responsibilities and Role

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Abstract

The present doldrums position and state of decadence, lack of knowledge and wisdom, back benchers in science and technology, education, medicine, trade and business, banking system and defensive incapability of the Muslim World prompted me to write this article. My objective is to investigate our teaching-learning process and provide guidelines for efficient and effective teaching. Apart from the opinion of prominent scholars and experts, I will also look at our principal sources of inspiration, which are, the Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), and examples of the 'enlightened Caliphs' and see if we could work out seminal guidelines for our rectification. We have gathered together some of these impressions; these are all tentative, nothing final about them, but these are here nonetheless.

Keywords: Teacher's Qualities, Knowledge and wisdom, Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet, Teaching-learning process

Introduction

The first revelation called upon the Prophet (SAW) and humanity was to pursue education and acquire knowledge in accordance with the Divine guidance of Allah (SWT): "Read and understand in the Name of the Lord and Cherisher".¹ The Qur'an says, "Allah (SWT) will raise up to honourable ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge."² Adam (RAA) was raised to the highest rank among beings because of knowledge.

The Prophet (SAW) attained the height of eminence by his perfection; "He dispelled the darkness (of the World) by his grace; Excellent were all his qualities; Pray for blessings on him and his descendants."³ He is asked in the Qur'an to pray for an increase in knowledge.⁴ The Prophet (SAW) also said: "Acquire knowledge from cradle to grave".⁵ He further stated that the acquisition of knowledge is a duty imposed on every Muslim.⁶ It is inspiring to

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recall that the very first word that was revealed to him is Iqra (read). Human beings have many qualities which are latent or which they may wish to suppress or conceal to their own detriment. The Prophet (SAW) also said: "Wisdom is the lost property of the Muslim; he recovers it wherever he finds it".⁷ This is inspiring and indicates that there is no monopoly in matters of knowledge.

Among children of Adam (RAA), those who excel in knowledge and wisdom, are the world leaders and hold the office of Imam (Spiritual Guide). Knowledge and wisdom protect your ideological boundaries from evil. The Muslim World, unfortunately, failed to excel in knowledge and wisdom. Acquiring knowledge and understanding it (research) is left to the others, resulting in Muslims' degradation in science and technology as well as in trade and business. The Prophet (SAW) said that knowledge is a foundation of Islam. Regarding this let us look at the Prophet's (SAW) concern, attitude and priority; to educate Muslim children up to reading level, he even asked the prisoners of Badr, who were the non-believers of Mecca, and considered this as their compensation. This reflects his concern about education and treatment of prisoners of war at a time when Muslims were fighting for their own survival.

There is a difference in acquiring knowledge, understanding knowledge, and education targeting literacy. To increase the rate of literacy among Muslims, the Prophet (SAW) utilized the services of even the non-believers of Mecca, i.e., prisoners of Badr. Knowledge must be of truth and reality or of what the Qur'an calls Haqq (Truth). Unfortunately, the Muslim World has confused knowledge with literacy. The dilemma is that we are utilizing our resources to increase the rate of literacy rather than acquiring knowledge, even then we fail in it.

There are many other factors contributing to the degradation of Muslim World but to me the first and the most important is the education. It is education which transforms a casual person into a responsible, socio-economic developer and nation builder. As I have stated above that the education has always received great importance in Islam. The pivotal ingredient in education is the teacher and consequently teacher's qualities, role and responsibilities. My objective in this paper is to investigate our teaching-learning process and provide guidelines for efficient and effective teaching. May Allah (SWT) bless us to fulfil our duties of acquiring and understanding knowledge, bring back our virtues and qualities, i.e., competence, energy, initiative,

seriousness, creativity, and wisdom, and enabling us for the world leadership (with justice) and to hold the office of Imam (Spiritual Guide). We are born to learn.

Teacher's Training and Selection

In the developing countries especially most of the Muslim World, there is very little budget allocation for education as a whole and teachers training in particular. Being noble profession by its nature that is next to the parent's role it was never recognised as high rank, well respected and well paid in the community. Consequently, it is not preferred by bright and intelligent students. Another dilemma is that many education departments by an excuse of shortage appoint young teen with less than 20 years age as untrained teachers. Even if not, after year 10 with 9 months training (including 3 months holidays), these immature youth get their appointment as primary teacher. Insufficient, inadequate and all-round training is not only the dilemma but most of the curriculum never emphasises the inclusion of child psychology, character building and personality development etc.

Another principle that needs to be addressed in teaching learning is the selection of the right man for the right job. In other words, merit is to serve as the sole criterion of selection of manpower. Race, colour, and creed should not be allowed to influence its decisions. It may be underscored that the Prophet (SAW) recruited even non-Muslims for diplomatic services sheerly on the basis of their competency. The Prophet (SAW) from amongst his own blood relations assigned only to Ali (RAA) some state responsibilities. Abu Bakr Siddique (RAA) meticulously avoided even a single appointment of any of his near relations in the state administration. He strictly maintained that the state should not only ensure a right man for the right job but should also provide them adequate professional freedom so that they could do full justice to their job. Omar-e-Farooq (RAA) retained the above provisions (that is, right man for the right job).

This is an unfortunate practice nowadays that we look only at academic record and depend on only a few questions in a short interview. In our teaching-learning process, emphasis is only on curriculum, selection and performance. We never emphasize the character building and/or personality development aspect. Passionate, Persistent, Up for Challenges, Results-Oriented, Creative and Curious, Optimistic and Flexibility are some of the important qualities of a teacher. I can remember that in old days, a few top list candidates used to be invited to give a talk, stay for a

few days on campus and selection committee consisting of specialist from different aspect meet them, spend some time with them and then they go for final selection. Unfortunately we want to excel in academic and character building but do not have the time to find the 'right man for right job'.

Teacher as a Role Model

There should not be any doubt in our mind that highest rank teacher is Allah (SWT). He not only taught Adam (RAA) to upgrade his ranking but also through His Holy book, the Qu'ran, revealed "We said: Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."⁸

The teaching profession is noble and given high status in the society because the nature of the job is next to that of parents. Qur'an and the Hadiths of the Prophet (SAW) clearly indicated the responsibilities as: "As part of the mercy of God, you deal with them gently; if you were severer and hard heart, they would have broken away from you."⁹

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "Teach without chiding. Teachers are preferable to the scolders". He also said, "Use leniency to those whom you teach and those who learn from you".

He the prophet (SAW) is reported to say, "Teachers who have three students of social classes and do not treat them equally, will be in the line of the traitors on the Resurrection Day."

Ibn Maskub said, "Pupils should be praised and rewarded for any good manner and favorable act they show."

Imam al-Shafi'i, the famous jurist, said: "Whoever learns from books will miss the required achievement."¹⁰

Imam Al-Ghazzali, regards the first duty of a teacher to accept the child unconditionally as his own. He quotes the saying of our Prophet (SAW): "I am to you like a father who desires to save his child from the fires of hell."

In the next few lines we will highlight the teacher's responsibilities and qualities.

Influential Person in Student's Life

A teacher should discover those vast reserves inside the student, inspire and encourage them to strive for greatness.

Communication Specialist

A teacher should be a communication specialist. I can recall, my ideal teacher used to say that the best teacher must be the best

actor. His speech, body language and other actions should reflect what he wants to communicate.

Personal Characteristics

A teacher must possess the abilities of motivation, dedication, encouragement and a caring nature. He should be fair and respect his students to establish a strong interaction. He must be enthusiastic and enhance the confidence of students to work unsupervised. He should enhance their ability to conceptualize and utilize their skills, professionally as well as in daily life. Personal guidance can mean a lot to a student if they have confidence in the material and teaching methods of their teacher.

Encouragement

Encouragement is a key ingredient in enhancing the students' hidden qualities. Just few words like "Come on, you can do it, Hey, I believe you can achieve more; give it a try" etc. will do the job.

Support

The teacher should make his students to believe in him as a person whom they can trust and approach personally, during extended office hours, get tutoring or after-hours help etc. He should establish liking, respect, and a desire for students to do well. This should be in class as well outside class.

Challenge

The teacher should aim for high standards and help them achieve it.

Resource Provider

Teacher should share instructional resources /materials, websites and readings. They might also share professional resources such as journal articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools.

Course/Subject Specialist

The teacher should be well prepared in terms of the contents of the topics and be able to teach them with different approaches.

Learning Facilitator

Teachers in the 21st century have evolved. They are no longer the source of all knowledge in the classroom. We should inspire our students to take ownership in their own learning. We engage, lead, inspire, and encourage the students in our classrooms.

Mentor

There are many views about what types of actions can or cannot be defined as mentoring. In my opinion, we often make it much more complicated than it needs to be. At its core, mentoring is the act of listening, of asking good questions, and of probing others to be able to clearly articulate their ideas. Mentoring is about encouragement and inspiration. It is about investing time and energy in other people, because other people matter to us.

Available for Advice and Guidance

The community at most of the universities includes people of different races and cultural background therefore, it is the responsibility of a teacher to break the ice and make them feel at home as one family. If one is really murabbi (Patron), he can enlighten the student with Islamic reference along with subjective specialty. Consequently, this International community will be future ambassadors for the University

Innovation in Teaching

Innovative teaching is gaining ground in the world of education with the clever purpose to prepare students for an unpredictable and ever-changing world, in which the ability to take on challenges, develop useful ideas and solutions, and create valuable results is crucial. Innovation of didactic and learning strategies is one of the basic demands in teacher training at all levels of education.

The first step in human processing and learning is, however, perception.¹¹ Three of the five senses are used to perceive, store and retrieve reality; sight, sound and touch. Each person has differing abilities in each mode; based on the sense preferred, people can be classified broadly as visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners.

There are three main types of learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/physical/Tactile. I will add on another type Hands-on learning with some details.

Visual learning

Visual learning is a very powerful technique. It is a teaching and learning style in which ideas, concepts, data, and other information are associated with images and diagram. Visual learners can be classified into two categories, the first is linguistic and spatial wherein learners like to learn through written language, such as reading and writing tasks. The other

category is those who prefer learning with charts, demonstrations, videos, and other visual materials. Majority of students in a regular classroom need to see information in order to learn it. Visual learning help students to organize, analyse, clarify and think critically. We will not discuss the other possible details that can also enhance the visual learning process.

Auditory Learning

It is a learning style in which a person learns through listening. In this style it is better to brief them on what they are going to learn at the start followed by the actual teaching and at the end ask them through dialogues/questions what they have learned. It is also important to encourage them to discuss among themselves.

Kinaesthetic/Physical/Tactile Learning

In this style the students carrying out physical activities.

Hands on approach

The phrase "hands-on learning," also known as material-centered learning, inquiry-learning or minds-on learning, has various interpretations. One simple definition is "learning by doing. It is known that students who practice can often retain much more than just sitting in a lecture room and listening intently. A hands-on learning environment can quite often stimulate a student to learn as much as possible. They should be given assignments, take home Mini tests and Mini projects with reference to relevant websites or reference material available in the library.

Instructional Competencies

- Discourage all activities that interfere with the teaching-learning process such as; coming late to class, going out during lectures, use of mobiles, sleeping and un-necessary talk amongst themselves.
- Encourage and motivate the student to be more regular and focused in class.
- Identify the major themes, concepts, vocabulary, and ideas and organize the lecture accordingly.
- Start lecture with a short review of the previous lesson.
- Present new material in small steps so students can follow, digest and take good notes.
- Ask questions and check the responses without discouraging the wrong one.

- Provide models and daily life examples.
- Guide student practice with precise but encouraging remarks
- Check for student understanding through questions, quizzes, assignments, mini projects etc.
- Students can be of different background with different basic skills. The teacher should be able to recognize the background of students and adjust his teaching style. Never depends on the responses of top intelligent students (don't discourage them too) but make sure the poor and back benchers are following and understanding you too.
- Target a high success rate.
- Test them for challenging questions.
- Encourage, and motivate for independent study.
- Review material where errors were made and that needs over learning.

Application of Research in Teaching

The nature of the relationship between research and teaching and the desirability of developing explicit links between research and teaching is the subject of ongoing debate in higher education.¹² Some researchers suggest a positive or complementary relationship between teaching and research¹³, while others report a separate or negative relationship.¹⁴ Research oriented curriculum is not developed at undergraduate level in most of the countries. Anyhow, in the creative process, focus must be on well-defined simple concepts as an expeditious means of involving the students in research. Courses may incorporate the latest findings and perspectives related to your discipline, including the research carried out by others through projects, case studies, problem-based learning or designing and conducting experiments.

Miscellaneous

- The teacher should not be judged solely on what he is doing but rather be judged on the performance of his students.¹⁵ The most important quality of a teacher is not what he knows but what he is,¹⁶
- From time to time, the teacher should encourage his students without their identification to identify their difficulties and give suggestions for improvement in the teaching-learning process.

- Making lectures more meaningful learning experiences
- Encouraging students to read and come prepared for class
- Transmitting information electronically
- Make sure that contents being taught are well understood by the students
- Helping students to become self-directed learners.
- Encouraging students to participate more in class.
- Helping students to take notes that are worthwhile and foster learning
- Making your (large) lecture classes much more interactive
- Asking good questions to stimulate students' reflection.
- Break ice to encourage students to ask questions in class and visit for help frequently during office hours.
- Give good briefing on their mistakes on assignment/quizzes/exams etc.
- Although the advancement in technologies enhances the capabilities of a teacher to teach more effectively in many ways but at the same time, the internet, mobile phones, and social media have brought new challenges to teachers. We should work on finding solutions to those challenges rather than discouraging the use of new technology.
- Use of LMS, LCD/Projector to explain complicated diagrams/Figures, white board for explanation.
- My students even use SMS and e-mail to communicate and seek help.

Notes & References

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- ⁴ Al-Quran, 20:114.
- ⁵ Muttafaqun Alaih.
- ⁶ *Ibn Maajah* Vol. 1, Section 17, Hadith 224
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