A Comparative Study of the Relevancy of Western Educational Philosophies and Islamic Philosophies

Muhammad Awais Khan¹, Shakeel Ahmad Jan² & Farooq Chughtai³

¹ (Corresponding Author), Institute of Education and Research, University of Balochistan Quetta
Email: mawaiskhan8877@yahoo.com
² Institute of Education and Research, University of Balochistan Quetta
³ Institute of Education and Research, University of Balochistan Quetta

Abstract

Islam is the global and most pragmatic religion which is a complete of life. It is the divine religion bestowed with the faculty of furnishing practical and long lasting solution to all encountered problems in an authentic style. There are two schools of thoughts categorizing the religions and its verdicts in its own parameters and perspectives. There are two main titles used for these classifications as Islamic and western views and proofed. These two main classes are further branched as sub categories in light of its practices and principles. The present study describes and evaluates the two prominent western educational philosophies named Perennialism and essentialism with its major components and then a comparative analysis is made with Islamic philosophy. This study extends the logical and literature based proofs about the intersecting similarities between both educational philosophies. The study focuses mainly on the notions of Islamic philosophy and its components. Citations of quranic verses have been cited for validation of sources. The study was qualitative in nature and was based review of literature. The tool of literary discourse analysis was applied for elaboration of reliable differences. Genuine web sites were consulted for authentication of results. Particular Area. The study disclosed that the Islamic philosophical system was more authentic and flexible in terms of knowledge and social relationships. The results of comparison highlighted that we should try to practice the holistic and experiential application of Islamic philosophies for durable enactment of strong relationship between learners and teachers for long lasting social aims and objectives.

Keywords Islamic Philosophy, Essentialism, Perennialsim, Quranic Sources, Values, Knowledge.

Introduction

Islam is the most empirical religion which facilitates genuine knowledge and guidance in every field of life. Unfortunately, little research work has been carried out to highlight the golden precepts and concepts of Islamic educational theories over the decades. It has a shining and pragmatic learning history as the first revelation focuses on the obligation of reading, which is the major gate way to learning. The golden 1400 years learning history of Islam confirms its affection and importance to learning. (Halstead, 2004) Islam tends to be part of the tradition of monotheism and has rapidly formed the permanent base of a global society. It is a monotheistic religion of Abraham and Hazrat Muhammad S.A.W. is the last Prophet of Allah who founded this religion in light of divine guidance through the verses of the Holy Quran. Islam has its origin commencing with the Arabic word “Aslama” means obedience to Allah Almighty. So a believer surrenders to Allah in every field of life and affirms that Allah is the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and sole Master of this gigantic universe. The key purpose of Islam is “Towhead” which means Oneness of Allah and believing that Muhammad
Education is a multidimensional term and carries different meanings to different philosophers and educators. According to Russell, philosophy is an attempt to critically answer the burning questions and reducing all the conflicts or inattention to them. Education for a World Drift regarding criteria for the education of the humanity. According to Russell, philosophy is an attempt to construct harmony between reality, including those conflicting epistemologies, and pursues the expression of the essence in the life and its practices in shape educational activities. In reality, from a Muslim point of view, both components of the term, 'ideology' and 'learning', are controversial, but for various motives in their respective fields (Halstead, 2004).

Likewise, Essentialism is a sort of philosophical and epistemological direction that believes and pursues the expression of the essence in the life and its practices in shape educational activities. In reality, including those conflicting epistemologies, it is a random collection of numerous modern Western philosophical schools (Zhongying, 2004).

Therefore, in this study, we described both the educational philosophies but concerning Islamic philosophy and its application in the field of education for overall development of the learners. Main objectives of the current micro research were the exploration of the two educational philosophies named as Perennialsim and Essentialism.

This study provides the concept of Islamic philosophy of education, their aims of education, which prove that Islamic education is aimed at the overall development of human personality and its productive performance of the well-being of humanity in particular.

### Objectives of the study

The following were the major objectives of the study:
- To identify Islamic Philosophy of Education
- To identify the precepts of Perennialsim and Essentialism.
- To explore the vastness of Islamic Philosophy in comparison to Western Philosophies.

### Literature Review

The researcher has studied all the relevant and available literary data to sort out a historical overviews of western philosophy with special reference to the philosophy of Perennialsim and Essentialisms. A detailed study of Islamic philosophy was also conducted to valid the results of the study. Literature review was comprised of the detailed analysis of Western philosophies, Perennialsim and Essentialism. All the major concepts, parameters and practices were study in detailed to furnish a solid result. Then both were ordered in the light of Islamic philosophy.

### Historical overview of Islamic and Western traditions specifically their divine and Rational Philosophical Status

The aims and values of education with comprehensive interpretations were the ideals of all the educational philosophers including Plato. So in this connection, (Livingstone, 1943) stated in a book “Education for a World A drift” regarding criteria for the philosophy of life; principles for judgment and ruling life, methods for integration of civilization and culture, and knowledge related to the science of good and evil. Similarly, Dewey described philosophy in terms of a theory of education but he specifies that this is a general theory concerning education and its related problems. He declared that philosophy is related to educating the humanity. According to Russell, philosophy is an attempt to critically answer the burning questions and reducing all the confusion (Sultana, 2012).

### Education

Education is a multidimensional term and carries different meanings to different philosophers and scholars. A few of the definitions of education are stated as under:

1. **Socrates** "Education means to bring out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man.”
A Comparative Study of the Relevancy of Western Educational-----------Khan, Jan & Chughtai

2. **Plato** "Education is the capacity to feel pleasure and pain at the right moment it develops in the body and in the soul of the student all the beauty and all the perfection which he capable of."

3. **Aristotle** "Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body it develop men faculty especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the implementation of supreme court goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consist."

4. **John Dewey** "Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his responsibilities.

5. **Heinrich Pestalozzi** "Education is natural harmonious and progressive development of man's innate powers."

6. **Rousseau** "Education of man comments that Experience is the forerunner of precept.

We found from all the definitions of the renowned scholars that the main aim of education is transmission of values, development of skills and enhancement of knowledge in learners and establishment of civic society.

**Aims of Education in perspectives of great Philosophers**

Prominent educational philosophers in their philosophies have comprehensively described the aims of education. Here are a few citations from those western philosophers and philosophies.

1. According to primitive concepts, the main aim of education is the conservation of sponsored resources of all social practices.

2. Furthermore, idealistic and realistic philosophers as Plato and Aristotle stated that education mainly focused on creating citizens with a balanced formation of all human's abilities.

3. Conversely Catholicism has a different concept and they stated that education must enable individuals to be efficient through rejecting all the worldly desires.

4. Pansophism-Bacon, Comenius described that education mainly aims to enable individuals the acquisition of knowledge.

5. Likewise, John Locke stated that education is to discipline the mind.

6. Conversely, Rousseau was a naturalist philosopher so he described the aims of education as developing free spontaneous expression.

7. According to Froebel, education must strive to develop a child’s unique potentialities.

8. Thorndike indicated that education is in order to aid in the transmission of individual ambitions.

9. John Dewey described the aims of education in a different way such as “To have more education”.

10. Adler stated that education is the practice of moral and intellectual virtues (Sultana, 2012).

Furthermore, based on different views of the educational philosophers, this study will cover two educational philosophies such as perennialism and essentialism with special reference to Islamic philosophy.

**Western Theory of Perennialism**

Thomas Aquinas is the chief exponent of perennialism (Oldmeadow, 2007). Roots of Perennialism are in the philosophy of Neo-scholasticism who believes in the cause and effect relationship in all events and actions. As well, as believe that a person must obtain knowledge largely with human reasons and then rely on faith in that realm. This philosophy focused on the importance of using the mind and reasoning. Besides, they focused on studying the immense works of the past and declared those works as role models for future learners. Likewise, they believe that reason is the means to build a sense of observed phenomena. They also held on to the notion that through the application of the scientific method, one can know the reality of a thing. Their concept about the universe is that, “universe has order and design (Karhoff, 2003).

Perennialist described knowledge as truth and according to their concept truth is the same everywhere. They believed in the existence of priori truth and students should be taught to match to it. Perennialist philosophy has its roots in the Neo-Scholastic tradition, but its concept of axiology is closer to that of the pragmatists. They believed in the notion that the leading values that are important in building up the west to be studied. Perennialist gives importance to the study of classic literature, as they believed that this literature is influential (Slater & Griggs, 2015).
Western Theory of Essentialism
This philosophy is rooted in Idealism and to some extent is based on the contents of Realism. This philosophy is less aristocratic and less intellectual. They described the concept that schools should convey tested facts and truth rather than executing innovational programs. Likewise, they believe in the concept of compulsory subjects. The Chief Exponent of this philosophy is William Bagley. This educational philosophy believes in the existence of an external reality. This reality can take hold of the mind. They believe that truth can be known and taught, as truth exists. Knowledge is gained through the interaction of experiences and rational thought (Meaning, S. Function of Philosophy of Education. Online at http://www.mu.ac.in/myweb_test/md%20edu/MA%20Edu.%20Philosophy.pdf [accessed 5/30/2014]. They identify that good value is determined and shaped by God and values are determined by Natural Law. Things are beautiful when they exactly reveal how things in nature are or how they can be (Slater & Griggs, 2015).

Islamic Philosophy
Islamic philosophy of education has its roots in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, which are the primary sources of guidance for human beings. Allah has revealed the holy Quran to the last Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. Islamic philosophy has also rooted in the secondary sources (Ijma, Qiyas, and ijtihad). Islamic philosophy of education examines, assess, deconstruct and disintegrate the present educational infrastructure and attempt to construct new concepts. This philosophy believes in the concept of construction and renovation of human life. A balanced relationship between individuals, society, and the world is the characteristic of the Islamic philosophy of education. The ethical authority for a balanced relationship among various parties is the religion of the Holy Quran. Universal values are derived from the holy Quran. The mission of education in Islam is to link every human action or behavior with ideal moral values derived from the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Islamic education strives to balance the physical, mental, psychological, spiritual activities of human beings and to integrate political, social, economic, and individual life with Islam. In Islam, rational reasoning is centred on balance and unification. There is no distinction amongst religion, politics, and science, as well as among intellect and sensation, soul and body. Topics are different, comprised of special units but the units are integrated and stand for the same and core objective. Islam identifies the key role of the mind that it is as an important mechanism for research and inquiry. In addition, it is not the supreme and distinctive tool for revealing the complete truth Allah (S.W.T) is the creator of everything. All the messengers are the chief exponents of real guidance. Famous Muslim philosophers are Al Kind, AlRazi, AlFarabi, Ibn i Sina, Ibn i Rushd, Imam Ghazali, Ibn Khalidun. The word reality consists of everything that is, whether or not it is visible or comprehensive and Allah (S.W.T) is the ultimate and supreme reality (Rayan, 2012).

“He is the light of the heavens and the earth, the parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it, a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as if it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the Eastnor the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, through the fire, scarce touched it light upon light” (Quran: 24:35).

Depiction of Allah and the world in the light of translation of the Holy Quran:
• “Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation) we clove them as under” (Quran: 21:30).
• “To him belong the east and the west, wherever you turn, there is his presence”.
• For the understanding of human beings, attributes of Allah have been described by Allah through the revelation that is mentioned in the Holy Quran. Such as life, eternity, unity, power, truth, beauty, justice, and love

Creation of man in the light of the Quranic verses
“Does not man remember that we created him before while he was nothing” (Qiran: 19:67). “Man is created for an appointed term” (Quran: 6:21). “A leech-like clot of congealed blood that takes the form of water or watery clay sculpted into shape in proper proportions as a life germ.” (Quran: 2:02). “Human beings have been blessed with wisdom and love, listening and eyesight” (Quran: 27:78).

Vicegerent of Allah
“Destined to become Allah’s caliph on earth, ordained to die one day, after that, surely you will die” (Quran: 23:15). “Allah fashioned mankind in the most attractive molds, thus he is the best of all that has been fashioned (Al Quran: 95:4). “We have honoured the offspring of Adam, carrying them on land and in the ocean, and providing them with good substance” (Al Quran: 17:70). “Do you not see
that Allah made available for you what is in the skies and on the earth and flooded you with many blessings known and unknown” (Quran: 31). “His plan contemplates man's free use of spiritual traits such as power and choice” (Quran: 18:29, 76:29).

There is no compulsion in faith:
- Allah’s guidance is open to all who have the willed to profit by it” (Al Quran: 81:28).
- Man's ability to study and gather expertise is limitless. “Read and your lord is the most generous, the one who taught with the pen, he taught man what did not know” (Quran: 96).

Life after death
“And they will be resurrected on Doom’s day” (Al Quran: 56:61), Baanie, 1997).

The concept of Islamic epistemology is vast as compared to western epistemology

The word used for knowledge in Arabic is “Ilm” which covers three concepts as theory, action, and education. Importance of knowledge in Islam. Total number of verses regarding the word “Ilm” is 704 while the word “Qalam” has been mentioned in two places and “Al kitab” in 230 places. First word of Quranic revelation is “Iqra’. First-teaching class started after the creation of Hazrat Adam A.S., and Allah is the first teacher and the supreme guide of humanity. Importance of knowledge in the light of the Quranic verses. “Allah has made man as his vicegerent due to knowledge, when angles argued about the vicegerency of man then Allah Almighty taught Adam A.S. the names of something and then Adam A.S. told them and hence proved his ability of vicegerency on earth” (Quran, 2). “Do those who do not know, equal those who know?” (Quran, 39). Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. can be described as “Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to paradise easy for him”. “Acquire knowledge even if it is in China.” The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr.

Objectives of knowledge in Islam
“And I have not created the Jinn and the Man except that they should serve me” Tarbyah (to grow and to increase) “And lower unto them, the wing of submission through mercy and say my lord have blessings known and unknown” (Quran: 17:124). Talim to know. “He who taught you the use of pen taught men that which he knows not” (Al Aq). Talib (adab) teaching of good manners, ethics, and politeness. Talib means the discipline of mind, body, and soul. Knowledge in Islam is worship. Knowledge in Islam has three degrees which are discussed as under:

Revealed knowledge (Haq al yaqin)
Allah says in the Holy Quran “And it is not possible for a man that Allah shall speak to him except through inspiration or from behind a veil or that he sends a messenger who reveals by his permission that which he wills” (Quran, 26:51).

Rationality or reasoning (Ilm al yaqin)
Ilm al yaqin in the light of the quranic verse can be translated as “And he has subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon and the stars are subjected by his commands, surely, in this are proofs for people who understand” (Quran, 16:12).

Empirical (Ain al yaqin)
Allah says in the Holy Quran, “It is He Allah who has created for you the faculties of hearing, sight, feelings, and understanding” (Q Ethics could be described as the ideals which people hold sacred in life. These are the principles which affirm the acceptance or rejection of a view or action. Life issues have been described in the Holy Quran as values and Muslims are responsible to put into practice all such values with sincerity and devotion. Exercise and practices of such values are not the same and stable for every place and time. Progress and creativity of values depend upon the ability of Muslims. The Holy Quran is vividly describing the type of government, in general, which can be summarized as Shoora in which affairs are dealt and decided mutually (Quran, 42:38). Another verse of the Holy Quran described the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. as a gentle leader of the shoora instead of a harsh-hearted which affirmed him as a model ruler of the world, if you were not a gentle heart so people would leave you and you would be alone in this society. Furthermore, Allah almighty asked him to forgive their mistakes and ask Allah to forgive their mistakes too because forgiveness is the cordial principle of Islamic philosophy. Also, trust in Allah almighty in taking decisions” (Quran, 3:15). All the Core Values in Islam are universal and permanent. Important values are spiritual values rather than material values. In the Islamic system of education, there are some core values without which human beings cannot live. Attributes of Allah almighty that have been mentioned in the Holy Quran are some basic values. Those core values are presented as under;
A Comparative Study of the Relevancy of Western Educational

Khan, Jan & Chughtai

Figure 1: Basic values in Quran:

- **Life (Protection of life):** “And there is life for you in al qisas” (Quran, 2:179).
- Protection of dignity (al izzat) (Quran: 24). “Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and the hereafter, for them is severe azab”.
- Protection of al aqal (intellect)
- Protection of al mal (property).
- **Eternity:** (Time without end) this attribute is of ALLAH’S attribute. Man is created for an appointed term. Eternal life for Muslims is in Jannah.

The Concept and Principle of Unity in Islamic Philosophy

Tauheed is the first pillar of Islam which is the acceptance of divine principle of Oneness of ALLAH. The holy Quran has emphasized this attribute with special reference in its divine verses in different surahs as under:

- Translation of a Quranic verse “It is You we worship and You we ask for help (Quran: 1:5).
- This value brings harmony and peace among members of the family as well as among nations and ideological groups.
- Quranic verse regarding equality of mankind “O; Mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another, indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you (Quran: 49).
- Knowledge: Allah is the observer of all things. He knows the seen and the unseen; nothing is hidden from Him in the heavens and the earth.

Fairness of Allah Almighty

Allah is indeed the perfect evaluator he is not unfair in any way. He doesn't treat individuals unfairly; the meaning of a Hadiths is regarding justice. “If Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad S.A.W were to steal, Muhammad would certainly cut off her hand”.

Religious Tolerance

Islam gives importance to universal values such as love, kindness and fellow feelings. Allah loves and He shows His love by producing, maintaining, nurturing, safeguarding, assisting, guiding and maturing all domains of human beings. Besides goodness is an attribute of Allah, it remains everyone's responsibility to do well with all in their span of life. All prophets were doing well even with their enemies. Beauty with special focus on inner beauty has more influence than visible beauty which is time bounded. Allah has the most beautiful names and utmost superiority and creates everything in the best of molds. ALLAH created the universe with beauty (Akgunduz, 2015).
Muslim Philosophers and Islamic Philosophy of Education
In the elevated age of Islamic society, there was a considerable amount of writing that usually addressed educational problems. Both Akhlag-i-Naseri by Nasir al-Din Tusi and Taharat al-A’arag by Ibn Maskuya contain extensive moral education discussions and other educational issues. May be the nearest to an early introduction to educational philosophy is Al-Fatihat al ulum of Ghazali. The famous scholar and social scientist, Ibn Khaldun explained the objectives of education, the curriculum, and the teaching skills in al-Muqaddimah and gives a detailed understanding of the current situation of Islamic knowledge. Themes such as schooling, teaching, learning, youth, love, and devotion are discussed in other documents, including Siyasat Namah by Nizam al-Mulk and Ghulistan and Bustan by Sa’di. The Ikhwan al-Safa Treatises (Ras’il) contain explanations of psychological and metaphysical problems of special interest to educators (Halstead, 2004).

Research Methodology of the Study
This study was qualitative in nature and used an extensive literature review. All the available data from previous research articles, power points, discussions, columns, and web-based materials were utilized for achieving the research objectives. Furthermore, the literature strengthens the stances regarding perennialism and essentialism. Nevertheless, more focus was to discover their claims and arguments and its comparative analysis with Islamic philosophy. The literary tool of discourse analysis was followed for finding out the differences between Islamic and western philosophy specifically perennialism and essentialism. The present study was initiated to evaluate the applicability and strength of Islamic philosophy specifically in contrast to Essentialism and Perennialism.

Findings
Perennialism and Islamic Philosophy, a Comparative Analysis:
- Perennialism is an educational philosophy that we believe is closely related to Islamic philosophy because Islam also provides a structure for practicality and this philosophy also identified experimentation.
- This philosophy believes in cause and effect relationships and Islamic philosophy also has the notion of this concept.
- According to this philosophy, reason and logic are the first things that further lead towards faith in the realm.
- Likewise, this philosophy believes in the importance of mind, reasoning, and past work. Where all the dimensions. Islamic philosophy integrates the application of scientific methods for understanding other phenomena. Knowledge is truth and same everywhere. Its axiology is closer to pragmatism. Whereas Islamic axiology is a universal code of conduct and focused on the integration of words with actions for compact development.

Difference in Essentialism and Islamic Philosophy:
- Essentialism is less intellectual, believes in the tested facts and truth.
- In the light of the literature essentialism is closely related and based on the precepts of Realism as well as Idealism,
- There is no importance and space for innovation and believes in the compulsory subjects. Where Islamic philosophy has its primary sources (Quran and Sunnah) as well as secondary sources are ijma, qiyas, and ijtihad, Deconstruction of the present educational infrastructure for constructing new concepts are the characteristics of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic Philosophy is Inclusive and Massive:
- This philosophy believes in the reconstruction of human life, balance of relationships among individuals and with the world in which all the human beings are performing their specified roles.
- Quran and Sunnah are the sources of ethical codes and believe in universal values.
- Aims of education are to link knowledge with practice and catering the domains of human feelings.
- Believes in the balance of mental, spiritual, psychological activities, and integration of political, social, economic, and individual life with Islamic principles.
- Islamic philosophy focuses on Harmony of logical thinking, and importance of the mind as an instrument for research and inquiry are some other characteristics of Islamic philosophy.
There is not separation but an integration of all the units in Islamic philosophy which confirms its universality.

**Conclusions**

Conclusion based on the data revealed the facts the both Western and Islamic philosophy are the foundations to all types of knowledge. The domains of western philosophy are based on the views and experiences of western philosophers while the base of Islamic philosophy is based on principles of Quran and Sunnah. There is high potency of authenticity and validity for overall grooming of a positive and multidimensional faculties of the learners.

This study achieved its objectives from the literature and concluded that Islamic education is more comprehensive than the concepts of perennialism and essentialism. Quran, and Sunnah are the principal sources whereas Ijma and Qiyas are the secondary sources for provision of solid foundations to concepts and practices. Islamic philosophy is a great tool of creating an ethical, morally sound and spiritually tested human beings. Islamic philosophy of education focused to shape and develops human beings in perspectives of trika, which is as follow:

- Mind (Cognitive Domain)
- Sense (Affective domain)
- Religious faith

Harmony between the described dimensions achieves the human values in reality. Islamic education believes that every Muslim should perform the duty to ensure the application of all the three domains in balance to achieve the desired aims of life. Dynamic attainment is achieved by the activism and application of the three dimensions, specifically epistemology believing in revelation, reasoning, and empiricism, whereas the ethical aspect comprises an indication and authority to every human activity. Finally, the study reveals that in the Islamic concept of education, knowledge, and science are closely linked and interrelated and there is no separation of science, politics and religion.

Literature provides evidence that Islamic Education also gives importance to the development of thinking and personal autonomy for achieving a standard value system which is the main branch of axiology.

**Recommendations:**

1. The following are the recommendations based on the analysis of data and conclusions. Keeping in view the broad scope and dimensions of Islamic concept of education, modification of education should be made in light of Islamic philosophical principles. All educational pedagogies and activities should be transformed keeping in mind the coherence and elasticity of Islamic rules. Islamic philosophical principles have the capacity to cope up with the challenges of 21st century so Islamic philosophical principles should be applied for attainment of desired objectives based on cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

2. The guidelines furnished by Islamic philosophies should be utilized for selection of teachers and learners. The precepts of the present qualitative study should be used for further research studies in the field of education.

**References**

Akhtar, Sayyid Wahid. "nd The Islamic Concept of Knowledge." Al-Tawhid.
Baianie, I. M. The Islamic view of the Human being. Friday speech Delivered at the Islamic center of Raleigh. (1997, July 4)
A Comparative Study of the Relevancy of Western Educational----------Khan, Jan & Chughtai


