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ROLE OF SCHOOL TEACHERS IN STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The literal meaning of "education" is "to create something gradually until it reaches the end." This term idiomatically means: the set of acts or deliberate and intentional effects of a human being (trainer) in order to influence on the knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors of other human being (s) (trainee) based on a measured plan; and in a sense, religious education is to provide natural opportunities so that individuals, with their personal experience and inspiration from their nature, discover the glorious effect of religion. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of teachers in the religious education of students. In this regard, the concepts of education, religion, religious education, and the goals and necessities of religious education are defined first. Then, the characteristics of faithful students and the role of the teacher in the Islamic literature are examined. Finally, we study and discuss the interaction between teacher, student, and religious education, and then conclude the paper. At the end, some recommendations are suggested to the Ministry of Education in order to optimize the status of religious education of schools and the community.

Keywords: Role of teacher, Education, Religion and religious education.

INTRODUCTION

To clarify the concept of the role of teacher, we need to examine the concept of "role" and "teacher".

Role

"Role", in the Persian language, means the face and the image. "Map" is a term derived from "role" and means an image (Moein, 1992); but today, this term is used less in this sense. The other meaning of this term is "the set of acts and behaviors of a person represented by an artist on the scene. Role: He plays well in Nader Shah's role. This is a newfound meaning and is used in the translation of the French role." (Moein, 1992). This term is also used in sociology. In sociology, "role" idiomatically means social roles "expected behaviors of a society, which are around a social position."

Today, this term is used in the Persian language under the influence of the meaning of "role" and "social roles" in the sense of actual or expected behavior and influence.

Teacher:

"Teacher" is used with two meanings in Persian: 1. Trainer and educator; 2. A comprehensive philosopher or scientist of the science of the age, and author of some parts of the knowledge. In a special sense, the teacher is the tutor, the instructor and the professor (Moein, 1992). Therefore, the teacher, in the first sense, is a term that refers to anyone who teaches something to somebody. Accordingly, the prophets, clerics (religious authorities, preachers, imams of the congregation), university professors, trainers, educators, and education instructors are all teachers. In a narration from the Prophet, he also called himself a teacher. Arabs today call their clerics and religious leaders teachers. But in Persian, this term is more used about school teachers - primary, secondary and high school; thus, the discussion of this paper is limited to school teachers. Now, by clarifying the meaning of the role and the teacher, it is time to examine the concept of the "role of teacher". This term was first become common in Western countries, and its prevalence was also influenced by the emergence of sociology and the issues introduced in it.

In Western literature, this term has been used in three meanings:

1. What teachers usually do in the classroom as a teacher; such as educational and training activities.
2. The social status of the teacher, which separates him/her from other social status or situations.
3. There are expectations from the teacher as a teacher; such as the parents, students, school administrators and others expectations.

In Persian educational literature, the word "role" has been used mainly in two meanings:

1. The teacher's behavior in classroom and school and their impact on their students;
2. The expectations from the teacher; that is, the behaviors and impacts others expect from the teacher, although now they do not actually have that behavior or impact.

The teacher's influence always follows and is the result of his/her actions. Therefore, we can say that the role of a teacher in the Persian language has two meanings: expected behaviors and actual behaviors. Expected behaviors (expected roles) are the behaviors that the teacher must do to achieve his/her goal in training. In other words, the expected roles of a teacher are necessary for the success of the educational system. The actual behaviors (actual roles) are the behaviors that the teacher currently has in class and in school. Teachers' actual roles may coincide with the expected roles and may not be (Davoodi, 2005).

From the above, it is concluded that "teacher" has a broad meaning in the Persian language that includes teachers of schools, educators, university professors, etc.; the role also refers to their expected and actual behaviors.

In this paper, we focus on the role of school teachers, and do not address the role of other teachers, such as religious authorities, religious preachers and orators, imams and university professors. Teachers play a role in the various areas of the educational system. Some of them work in the field of empirical sciences, some in the humanities, some in technical and engineering fields, and some in religious education. In this paper, we do not address the role of teachers in all areas of education, but only the role of teachers in religious education. In the following, education, religion, and religious education are discussed.



Education

The literal meaning of "education" is "to create something gradually until it reaches the end." This term idiomatically means: the set of acts or deliberate and intentional effects of a human being (trainer) in order to influence on the knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors of other human being (s) (trainee) based on a measured plan (Davoodi, 2001). Education is not something to happen all at once; it is a process that should be done gradually and over time, by following its principles.

The concept of religion

In the Persian language, "religion" means "creed", "rite" and "principle", and in the Arabic language, it means "obedience", "subjugation", "rite" and "sharia"; it is idiomatically a set of valid propositions remained from authentic reference(s) in written form (Quran, Torah, and Gospel) or verbally which are reported authentically (Nikoo Harf Maher, 2013).

Religious education

Religious education is to provide natural opportunities so that individuals, with their personal experience and inspiration from their nature, discover the glorious effect of religion. Religious faith, as an absolute attachment, is an act that comes from human personality and occurs in the center of their hearty perception and intuitive cognition and encompasses all their parts (Fagirpour, 2010: 134).

In religious education, education is a tool for us to lead to training. Perhaps a student who knows all religious doctrines, but unfortunately, neither believes nor acts. This teaching is worthless. In religious matters, if education does not lead to action and belief, it is not only worthless, but also anti-value. Because it creates a spirit of pride and arrogance against religion and God. Anyone who knows everything about religion, but neither believes nor acts, they themselves suffer a spiritual arrogance. We must learn the religion to act. If our intention is not to act, it is better not to learn; because in the realm of religion, knowing and not acting is more harmful than not knowing and not acting (Growth of Elementary Education No. 126, October 2012, 12).

Purpose of religious education

According to Amir Al-Momenin (PBUH¹), the purpose of religious education is to educate monotheists in monotheism in person; those who are not only rationally accepted the unity of God the Creator, but also believes in his involvement in the natural and human world and his effective presence in the universe (especially in the context of human life) with all being and act with piety based on the belief in "being in the presence of God". Alavi's religious education aims to consolidate the everlasting and ubiquitous presence of God in the mind and the heart of the trainee. This is the same faith and the right of certainty. This right of certainty is the highest level of cognition that the love of a beloved leads to this kind of cognition. When the trainee gains this cognition and feeling, in practice he/she will always be dutiful and obedient to God. In fact, in order to achieve the main objective of monotheism in person, there are three intermediate goals that, by the classification of education professionals, are expressed as follows: 1) The cognitive domain: knowing God and the belief that he is the only being independent, and that man is a creature of intrinsic poverty, with a dependent being, who is always in the presence of God. 2) Emotional domain: stimulating the feelings and emotions of the trainee and making affection and love for God. 3) Sensory-motor domain: obeying the

¹ Peace Be Upon Him



divine orders and regulating behavior according to those commands (Aboutalebi, Religious Education from the Imam Ali's Point of View, p. 93).

The necessity for religious education

The education of each country reflects the whole view of the culture, values and educational heritage of the country, and the main and outstanding indicator of an educational system is the level of high ideals and the transcendental goals of its culture which it achieves. Therefore, the ultimate goal of a country's educational system is to educate people who are active and creative in shaping and realizing these goals.

The great purpose of the educational system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, by relying on the school of Islam and its rich cultural education, is to observe the growth of human personality in all dimensions. And the system of planning and implementing education of the country should be such that according to the material and spiritual resources of the society, and using effective methods and strategies, tries to educate a generation which makes the belief in the principles of the religion of Islam, following the Islamic rulings and customs, and having ethics and moral virtues, the basis of all individual and social activities (Karimi, 2009, pp. 256-257). Religious education seeks to "grow and strengthen religious beliefs, moods and emotions, and adherence to religious customs and practices in order to realize the religious personality." (Kiumarsy, 2007). Undoubtedly, the realization of such a great ideal involves the mobilization of appropriate facilities, available factors, favorable conditions, effective methods and techniques in order to shorten the distance between slogans and ideals on one hand and planning and implementation on the other hand (Karimi, 2009, pp. 256-257). Therefore, the factors present in the school, particularly teachers, play an important role in the physical and spiritual development of students and their religious education. The role of teacher in religious education is the expected and actual behaviors in the context of systematic and planned activities of educational institutions, in order to teach students the Islamic insight, nature, and forms to fulfill that goal (so that they must adhere to it in practice) (Davoodi, 2006, p. 16).

Features of believing students

Davoodi (2005) classifies the characteristics of believing students in four areas of cognition, faith, godliness, and morality, as follows:

1. The characteristics of a believing student in the cognitive dimension are: the ability to read the Qur'an and familiarity with its knowledge, familiarity with the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and Ahlul-Bayt (PBUT), familiarity with the history of Islam and the sire of the Prophet (PBUH) and Ahlul Bayt (PBUT), and familiarity with Arabic language.
2. The characteristics of a believing student in the context of faith in God are: knowing God, believing in God, loving God, worshiping God, and obedience and adherence to him.
3. The characteristics of a believing student regarding the prophecy and imamate are: the knowledge of prophecy and imamate, the belief in the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the imamate of the twelve imams, the love of the prophet and the imams, obedience and adherence to them, and considering them as model.
4. The characteristics of believing student regarding the resurrection are: the knowledge of the resurrection and the results of his/her actions and believing in them, and the preference for the welfare of the world hereafter rather than this world.



5. The religious characteristics of a believing student are: familiarity with the rules, philosophy, benefits, and effects of prayer and fasting, getting used to daily prayers and the fasting of Ramadan, familiarity with obligatory prayers and worshiping which later become his/her subjects, familiarity with the daily *navales*².
6. The characteristics of a believing student in the domain of individual morality are: piety, trust, sincerity, the spirit of thanksgiving against the blessings of God, patience and stability, self-esteem, optimism to life, reasoning and thinking, seeking science, discipline, feeling responsibility, seriousness and perseverance in work, body care, grooming and sanitation, appearance dressing, and moderation.
7. The characteristics of a believing student in relation to the family are: gratitude towards parents and observing their rights, respect for them, goodness to the parents, observing their privacy, and respect for the relatives.
8. The characteristics of a believing student in relation to other people in society can be summarized in these attributes: truthfulness, loyalty, trusteeship, socializing with people, loving believers, respect for others, observing others' rights, benevolence for others and inviting to goodness, helping others, preserving boundaries in relation to non-believers, modesty, observing the privacy in relationships with the opposite gender, and respect for and obedience to the law.

The position and role of a teacher in Islam

In general, in the Islamic literature, three essential roles are stated for the teacher:

1. Continuing the way of the prophets:

The main task of the prophets was education, and the teacher plays the same role in the school. The Qur'an says: "It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom,- although they had been, before, in manifest error" (Jumua, verse 2). So, in fact, the teacher does what the prophets did.

2. Guiding and enlightening:

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) says: "Indeed, the scholars on the earth are like stars in the sky that the people find their way in the darkness of the land and the sea with their help. When the stars are put out, perhaps the guided people will be misled". Although the narrative is about the scholars, since the school teachers take on the same responsibility as the one expressed in this narrative for scholars, they are also included in this narrative.

3. Defending the cultural boundaries:

Imam Sadeq (PBUH) says: "Shia scholars defend the weak borders and Shia Muslims and prevent the devil and his fellows from invading them". This Hadith is like the previous narrative about scholars, but those who provide children, adolescents and young students in schools with correct thinking and insight, and defend their intellectual and ideological boundaries against the onslaught of undesirable cultures, are undoubtedly included in the narrative above. The value and position of the teacher are not peculiar to Islam. There are signs of the high position of teacher in non-Muslims speeches. Aristotle says: "Those who educate children should be respected more than those who bring them up, because they only give life to the child, while teachers teach him the art of better living (Shoari Nejad, 1996).

² Good work, which is not obligatory for humans.



Teacher-student interaction and religious education

A significant part of schoolchildren's time is spent in the classroom interacting with the teacher. On the other hand, teacher-student interaction forms a major part of school education activities. Although the main purpose of these interactions is the student's academic education, it affects the behaviors, attitudes, values, and beliefs and, consequently, also affects their personality formation. For example, in the chemistry classroom, in addition to the concepts of chemistry, the teacher can teach collaboration with other students, hard work, and national pride, or on the contrary, he/she can make hate for cooperation, tend to escape the burden of responsibilities, and distrust the nationality and the country in the student; and also the teacher can strengthen or weaken the attitudes, values, beliefs and religious knowledge of the students. The personal characteristics of a teacher can also affect students and create and reinforce behavior, attitude, value or belief in them, because the personal characteristics of a teacher make him/her popular or hateful among the students. In the former case, the student considers the teacher as a model and accepts all his/her attitudes and beliefs; and in the latter case, the student will take some distance from all the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs and values of the teacher. According to some studies (Mason et al., 1989, pp. 487-448), teacher's gender also has a particular impact on students' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. In some countries, the majority of education and management staff of elementary schools are women. Also in high schools, most often the social sciences and literature are taught by women, and empirical and mathematical sciences are taught by men. In these countries, this situation has created the idea for students that teaching in elementary schools and teaching social science and literature are feminine works; hence, male students do not want to attend these lessons. Moreover, since most of the students take their homosexuals as a model, this issue is difficult for male students in elementary schools. Also, the type of teacher's expectations from the students affects their attitudes and behaviors. According to the studies conducted in this context (Mason et al., 1989, p. 487), the teacher's expectation of students' academic performance affects their behavior; that is, in students whose teachers expect them to perform highly, the performance improves, and in contrary, in students whose teacher expects low performance from them, the performance worsens. The same thing can be true about students' religious performance. If a teacher expects his/her students to adhere to religious values, attitudes and behaviors, these items will gradually increase, while if a teacher is indifferent to these subjects or does not expect the students to adhere to religious values, attitudes and behaviors, they may be led to this practically. And also the followings affect the formation of students' behaviors, attitudes, and values: i) encouraging and punishing the students, ii) which behaviors, attitudes, values and beliefs are encouraged or rejected and punished by the teacher. For example, if the teacher encourages the cooperation, hard work, helping others, self-sacrifice and the like, and rejects the opposing behaviors, gradually these behaviors and attitudes are also created in the students.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the past, other factors influencing education were limited, and teacher and school had a distinguished role among other educational factors. Also, teacher had a single and superior place in the school and within the educational system. But in the new education, there are new factors other than teacher, and teacher has lost his outstanding position. In addition, in new



societies, the factors influencing education have increased and the school has lost its superior position among the affecting factors. However, it still seems that teachers and their thoughts and behaviors play an important role along with other factors in the religious education of students, so the followings are suggested:

1. The religious education of religion teachers and educators should be given more attention because religious education requires a variety of specialties and knowledge that religion teachers and educators do not know much about.
2. In the educational system, preparation of the textbook is more emphasized than teacher training. This is true about religion teachers and educators. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate about training the religion teachers and educators, to clarify whether the provided education to them is adequate for the expectations that society has of them or not.
3. The family plays an important role in educating students. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct some investigations on the current status of the Association of Parents and Teachers, and to explain its success or failure rate of coordinating the home and school and its effective factors. Also, some researches should be carried out to find the best ways to coordinate these two institutions in pursuit of educational goals.

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