

Philosophical Aspects of 'Murabbi': A Contextual Analysis with Special Reference to Globalization of Education.

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Abstract

In the ongoing process of searching the identity of Islamic education paradigm, theory and practice, there are certain values that should be contemplated with help of the exact traditional methodology of Islamic educational research. Although we could find some alternatives to replace our concrete area of knowledge seeking paradigm, the concept of 'Murabbi', the derivative of 'tharbiyah' has to be relevantized in the context of globalization of the education. 'Tharbiya' in its theoretical aspects cannot be fully related to 'Murabbi' in certain conditions through which this paper will be going on. The focus of this paper would be more on how the 'Murabbi' has to be philosophically interpreted within the situation of worldwide globalization of education, rather than pointing out the theory and usual application to the present situation. The foundation to establish the concept of 'Murabbi' as the relevantized character of educator, the author would analyze some classical educational texts apart from the basic foundations of Islamic education, Qur'Ēn and Sunnah. The extracts of the globalization concept will be taken out from different available literature in order to make good clarification of how 'depersonalized knowledge' can be negatively affect the society in certain aspects.

Key terms: *Tharbiyah, murabbi, educational globalization, relevantization.*

Introduction

While searching for the constructive or productive method of knowledge seeking, the Islamic educational tradition tried to found to some theories and practices which were based on the methodologies produced by the so-called philosophers of modern education. Islam in its earlier era showed its identity through various aspects of finding creative ways to think and search for knowledge, as the paradigm was free of prejudices and malpractices. The ideal bridge between the knowledgeable and the taught was quietly fulfilled with questions and intellectual debate. The fundamental elements of the religion enriched the minds of the scholars as they opened up a unique version of thought by which they broadened the concept of life-long teaching and learning. It was thought that the knowledge is not something only to live and survive but for the sake of whom created the lives and deaths. Islamic educational advancement was profound in terms of its uniqueness in a situation of ongoing fighting between religion and science.

Here we are not going to mention the past history of Islamic educational development as it has been discussed in various contexts. Yet we have to get an idea of how the concept of *tharbiyah* (not to be translated as education, as it is a western interpretation losing all the spirit of the real Islamic education, according to Al-Attas, 1983) took the key role in molding the eminent characters of Islamic knowledge. Searching for the original meaning of the term *tharbiyah* we find that it is a term used for growing up, nurturing, and bringing up the person (Ibn Manzur, 1414 A.H.). Ideally it has a broad meaning in our religion in every situation. The human history is a part of interpretation to the term and an ideal Muslim is living in its spiritual and philosophic meaning. What I intend to say is that the term *tharbiyah* is not a concept that is to be used only to educate by and large, but in the Islamic view point the inner meaning of educating with all ingredients of the basic spiritual needs of the human has to be indicated by it. Only then we get an outline of what the *murabbi* was and is and how it is connected to the interpretations of the Muslim education time and time again. In the globalized world of education, we have to make a revisit to our forgotten ideas of knowledge dissemination method based upon the situations of the person who lives with different types of identity, and then we are going to succeed in the concept of relevantizing *murabbi* accordingly.

Why should *murabbi* be an issue?

As I opine the reason why the God Allah the almighty used the term *rabb*, from which the term *murabbi* derives, when he narrates Adam in his critical condition as he was supposed to live out of heaven, may be to implicitly indicate the human need for a *murabbi* to nourish him through education that he wanted to get.

The Qur'anic verse (20: 121) can be interpreted with a spiritual dimension looking to this aspect. The self narrative of Adam was in a condition which he needed the *murabbi* who could lead him into the historical and moral existence of humanity. Then the first part of *tharbiyah* was done by Allah and here the issue begins. If *tharbiyah* is not something that is understood today relating it with all kinds of education, we ought to think about the philosophy of being the giver of something more than the education, and how this position can be understood standing at the level of a human. It is impossible to interpret Allah with our understanding of him as *murabbi* to everyone. Therefore we have to be placed in various situations that will help us to think differently in terms of finding the ways of understanding without going beyond the boundary. We have been discussing the educational related matters since decades and centuries and trying to find new ways of grasping and interpreting the knowledge according to our cognition. In the world of globalization of education, which we will be discussing in detail later, the education has been the most 'popular' newsmaker regardless of region or season. The universality of educational institutions including nurseries, schools, colleges and universities has been a thing of discussion being they are in a road of ongoing effort to be different from others, not in terms of the real educational excellence but the creative ways of educational marketing. At the moment all these institutions are competing in the open market to get the customers i.e. the students and institution community including parents, outsiders etc. "in the market discourse, education is seen as a good or commodity, and moral issues and moral training are neglected" (Daun&Walford, 2004).

Since education today is an issue the concept of *tharbiyah* with its full spirit is also going to be an issue. The narrative of a Muslim educator starts from the first verse of Qur'Ēn, iqra' through which he lives getting the divine messages. In order to understand this concept it is inevitable to know what the current situation of education world is. It is important to know the current education thoughts which lead the human into mere physical being without any moral or spiritual position. According to Michael Young (2009) as he mentions in his work: "What are schools for?" the concept of schools were derived from a thought that everyone in the capital society thought they would want to teach the working class and this was widely accepted. It is clear that there was no any intention of serving for the goodness of the society, focusing on the human value in any manner. From that kind of playing role gradually in the late 1980s and the 1990s the schools began to lose their credibility. "Educational institutions represent their funding agencies' agenda. During communist era in the 20th century schools and universities set up by socialist governments were aimed at achieving the goal of communism itself." (Israr Ahmad Khan, n.d.) The institutionalized version of education has been strongly opposed by different educational philosophers from that era. The curriculum for schools was designed by an agent whom I personally call as 'educational agent', for every country considering neither their development, backwardness nor the situations of their intellectual awareness. These agents were the middle class in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ibid.p.12.) the current theories of education always teach us that the education and educational institutions have been standing for representing the transformation of knowledge, since their birth. But this concept is to be criticized strongly looking from the context of the *tharbiyah* and *murabbi*. Admittedly we cannot say that the schools or universities nowadays are not the knowledge transforming institutions; instead they play the role of a broker by whom the market reaches its zenith of the progression as well as the depression. Recently the educational institutions are also busy with learning and searching about their segmentation, marketing mix and promotion. In that sense these institutions are not profound of education but they have a large amount of descriptive facts by which the students or today's knowledge customers can become high paid working machines. The moral aspect through education is not a primary issue of their concern.

Even though, for the sake of argument, we intend to agree their statement regarding the institutions as knowledge transformation centers the question is that what kind of knowledge is transformed by them (Young, 2009). Analyzing the knowledge that exists in the present situation, ideally and practically, it can be categorized into two namely, the knowledge for the mind and knowledge for the soul. The *murabbi* as he disseminates the knowledge through living in it (not with it like the so-called educators do today) performs his duty by inculcating the character into the soul of the student. That is regarded as his role, and the concept of the personalized knowledge (Kazmi, 1999) takes the front seat where the institutionalized knowledge fails to teach the character even by paying more than the deserved salary to the teachers. The present teachers of the aforementioned institutions represent the knowledge for the mind reminding the students to blindly memorize the portions of the lesson they taught. In fact the character is not something that is taught by the teacher, who lives in the classroom for a while closing all the ways of publicizing his own character (Kazmi, 1999). The point to be noticed here is that the character can be learned but cannot be taught. To the question whether the character can be taught in the schools Gandhi (1948) responded "No". (Rounder, S.,1994). Then how to learn the character along with virtue is another question. The answer is explicit, that is to say, by releventization of the *murabbi*. The student learns the

character and the virtue by participating in the life of the *murabbi* who is an open message conveyed to the former. To put it differently, the student is not taught how to create the virtue in him; instead he is merged with the life of *murabbi* by all means. The present education system, whether it is Islamic or non-Islamic in practice, is not the one which encompasses the human life or value. Today we have the universities and excellent architecture of educational buildings and at the same time the Islamic paradigm of knowledge is below its poverty line, as almost every one of them fails to create productive, intellectually and spiritually awakening knowledge. It means that we are still in a similar track contributing a parallel system of western education ignoring the spirit of education that should be inclined with human value.

“It is hard for us to teach virtue because our educational process excludes the element of in much of our study, thus divorcing the material of the study from the lively care which students instinctively have for it. As there is no connection between their real lives and the material they are studying there is no possibility of that they will be taught virtue.” (Rounder, S., 1994, p.151).

***Murabbi* and his message in the context of globalized education system**

As we mentioned earlier, the education, since the birth of man has been an issue until this moment. The educational globalization is a significant part of that continuing issue. The historical viewpoints marked the consequences of globalization as a drastic change in the then social and cultural aspects since its beginning. The homogeneous institutions of education and thought started to emerge underpinned by the same character of world culture. As a result of the movement, the total concept on education system throughout the nations is in a way of changing by looking to some temporary results by which it is thought that the purpose of educating people is to bring money. The teaching and learning process are changed into machinery. While reading Spring (2009), we can find the funniest thing that happened due to the globalization of education. It was the emergence of the global network which helped the educational scholars and their members work together to enhance the productivity of educational factories just like the world famous company brands (p.7). Now as the dealers of these factories they are in an ongoing investment of education to wherever they like. One of the key components of the educational globalization, according to him, is the global discourses that influence the local and national policymakers, school administrators, college faculties and teachers (p.5). This influence continues with process of depersonalization of knowledge, although it is something that thought to have certain advantages. By institutionalizing the education the student was and is taught to forget to see the teacher as ‘mine’; instead his mind is molded with being the teacher ‘of all’. This is the biggest issue regarding the institutionalization of knowledge and education. In fact ‘of all’ is ‘of none’ when we think of it simply. Looking from this aspect, whenever the teacher says ‘good morning class’, it seems there is something strange in his sound. The student is not under the teacher, but under the institution. By calling ‘class’ the teacher succumb to his institution without knowing that he is missing one of the basic step of *tharbiyah*. The impersonality of the institution forces to forget about ‘my student’ as a representative of productive knowledge and ‘my teacher’ as a nurturer of good character. The personal relation to one another, as it is unknown to none, is the entity that cannot be achieved by giving importance only to the curriculum of moral education.

Prevention of thinking is another trajectory caused by the process of institutionalization of education. The knowledge at its first sight, as we forgot about the Islamic educational philosophy, is not a process in the present situation. Rather it is a product by which the teacher can work as an easy accessible agent of education. The nature of products is their existences as easy accessible things while the nature of the process is not like so. The tradition of thinking has been facing some crucial situations through which the teacher and the learner are not considered as the persons related to the social or individual values. The advocates of the constructivist method of teaching claimed that the students have to be motivated to think and construct the knowledge stepping from the situation of his cognition level. But to me, that kind of encouragement merely created the awareness of how should the curriculum be managed within the time schedule doing the home works with complete submission of body and mind (and only then, as the students as well as the institution faculties think, they can keep their image as what they are inside the institution and what they are not outside.).

The reason for why I am focusing on the teachers’ attitude towards educational theories in the world of educational globalization is clear being I am trying to convey the message of an ideal *murabbi* in such a situation. The *murabbi* by living in a concept of good character of educator definitely has to promote the message from different angles, the divine message, the social message, the moral message, the cultural message (Abd al- HÉdi, 1984) and the individual message. To my understanding all these messages can be interpreted in a way that would be a narrative of *murabbi* founded by Qur’Én.

The divine message from the *murabbi* narrates the concept of being always alive and conscious (*dÉ’im al- yaqDah*) serving for his creator, as Allah says in QurÉn to be ‘*rabbÉniyyÉn*’ (faithful servants of God as

translated by Pickthall, 1939) ‘by your constant teaching of the scriptures and the constant studying thereof’ (3: 79). This message is the most important in the Islamic philosophy of education from which he begins his *rubĒbiyyah* (existence as *murabbi*) and arises to the position of being always alive and conscious. Then he does not have the need of cultivating the divinity in the knowledge he disseminates but he will and should be living in the present conveying the message of the past looking into the future with the divine power that is connected with his soul. The divinity forces him to think of the future in every moment and consequently the remaining messages open the way to come out from him. It is logical to say the one who teaches the person to be alive in human history has himself to be alive at first. The thought of the future makes *murabbi* alive everywhere.

It is told that if you have an intention of sowing the goodness then you have to make a perfect nurturing, because the harvest for the one who cultivates the goodness is the reward (for his goodness) from hereafter (Al-DainĒrĒ, 1419 A.H.). This statement is indirectly related to the social message of the *murabbi*. To cultivate goodness is his characteristic. The goodness is connected to the society in most, if not all, part of human life and his message to the social situation is the promotion of goodness for the future by being as its symbol. Then the *tharbiyah* for the society will be done by him accordingly. Just like he knows the individual as a narrative of the human history *murabbi* is able to know the society as the narrative of the situation that encompasses the human life. By the time he lives in society he observes them like a person who does not belong to them. Then he has a capability of what kind of message should be conveyed to those who are living within the society and it differs according to their situations.

With the message from the moral aspect related to *murabbi*, the student will be inculcated with a feeling of compassion for others. The student has a moral responsibility of being compassionate for those who are around him. ‘To respond with compassion,’ as explained by Nassbaum (2003) ‘I must be willing to entertain the thought that this suffering person might be me.’ (p.91). He continues saying, ‘this recognition as, they see it, helps explain why compassion so frequently leads to generous support for the needs of the others.’ The teacher being the representative of morality shares what is within him, not with him. Things with him have no value looking from the *tharbiyah* concept. To put it simply, knowledge or lesson that is with him is valueless because it can be shared by any technology that is available today but the knowledge, as a tool of moral development, that is within the knowledgeable cannot be done so. It is something connected to the morality of the person. If the person is knowledgeable without the knowledge within him, then he is only to be called a knowledge machine that works under the instructions of a branded knowledge firm. *Murabbi*, play the role in a sense that he gives what is within him and he refuses to acknowledge what is with him as it is good for nothing, to him.

The culture is being obliterated in the world of a global village. The current education promotes the teachers trained to be sensitive to cultural diversity (Thomas, 2005). Our concern about the culture is same as we approach towards the identity. In the life of an ideal *murabbi* culture does not make any change and it should not. So the purpose of publicizing his life is only to convey this message. The student must have acquired knowledge not to promote the message of cultural contexts. The message delivered by the *murabbi* should be taken disregarding the identity of culture. In fact he does not receive the identity that diversifies in situations. Instead he is the one whose identity is always lies in worldly limited but spiritually broadened concept of being *murabbi*. Other kinds of identity are regarded by him as the symbols of a temporary existence, and the process of creating meaning to the message from a variety of views cannot be done with them definitely.

The message from his individuality is to be delivered through continuous salvation of his student from a situation of being passive narration of what he gained from the former. Individual passiveness has become a common ingredient of the current education flow. Staying for sometime covered by the four walls of the classroom, the student may or may not be active; and to express his activeness he can just show it participating in classroom activities. But the issue emerges out of the classroom. His life there is in a vague manner. He cannot be active unless there is someone to rightly promote him. To be active out of the classroom is not something that can be shown by expressions and it is going to be another issue if he as student is unable to live being active out of the classroom context, because classroom is not his real world. He, with the help of *murabbi* can create the world bringing it to his classroom and only then he finds what is beyond the classroom. But for practicing that concept today’s education can do nothing, being it is not situational education which can be applied based upon the situation.

As the result of applying these messages in the life of the taught he is going to be a symbol of change, in all aspects of his life by which he can create a trend of thinking. To create thinking, not to prevent it by the institutionalizing concept of education as we mentioned earlier the teacher must be a promoter of thinking who can visualize the needs of the taught through his experience that occurred during the life in his narrative structure. The education according to Islamic point of view should be for the development of thinking and questioning. That is why Qur’Ēn emphasized the concept of thinking in the life of human being, particularly as

a concept that should be a habit of Muslim. The prophetic tradition of thinking began from the application of *sharĒĤnah* to the life of an uncivilized society in Arabian Peninsula. The following Hadith shows how the culture of Muslim was molded by a step-by-step process of thinking:

Hudaifa bin Yaman narrates: "...once I requested to the messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) to allow me to do the same worship as the prophet did (daily)." Continuing the Hadith, mentioning about the usual performance of the *ibadah* done by the prophet (P.B.U.H.) he says, "he would never pass a verse of the Qur'Ēn without contemplating on it and then he would complete it." (Ibn AbĒ UsĒmah, 1992).

The messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) has qualified those who are intellectuals with saying that, if they intend to talk they would think (p.815).

The knowledge personalized by the *murabbi* is a presentation of the old Islamic tradition of the knowledge seeking paradigm. The teacher and the taught following this method will be in an ongoing conversation created by their situation. Here the conversation does not mean only an oral activity which we are familiar with. The conversation comes from the process of *tharbiyah* that both of them take part actively.

"Personalized knowledge is communicated not only through language but more importantly also through styles and strategies for living. In other words, personalized knowledge is not a compendium of skill and information but rather an orientation to knowledge and the world." (Kazmi, 1999).

Implications and application of the concept '*murabbi*, the relevantized character of educator'

In a situation in which both the teacher and the taught fail to make intellectual conversation, it is the time to think of the relevantization of *murabbi*, applying to the education that encompasses the Islamic philosophy of *tharbiyah*. Since our curricula of education as well as its administration are in a state of "compromise" with national or state level education policy (Daun&Walford, 2004), it is the duty of the present Islamic educational administrators to revise the vision of their institutions throughout the world in order to bring back the notion of *tharbiyah*, a purification of human in all of its aspects with the guidance of *murabbi*. It has been a challenge for most, if not all, of today's education system to find the balance between moral and value based education- enhancing the ability of the teachers to be role models for their students- and the education improving the students' cognitive and technical skills. "Now globalization processes add to this challenge in that they result in increasing demand for competitive people" (p.5). But the point to be noticed here is that being that kind of role models neither can be taught nor trained by providing some special curricula. Islamic tradition regarding the cultivation of morality and value is not in theoretical basis, teaching them by some defined texts, but they are the compilations of knowledge and practice founded by the Qur'Ēn and Sunnah. However, it has been a current tragedy in the life of Muslim that he has to defend his values and belief system in order to survive the threatening of the western modernization of culture that occurred as consequence of the globalization (p.13). It came to an end in such a way that the system of education, even in Islamic world, had to be secularized without any complexity.

Here we have to regain the spirit of learning and teaching process of our Islamic institutions that would culminate in visualizing the concept which we can name as '*murabbi* the relevantized character of educator', firstly by giving importance to the knowledge that is to be personalized according to the situation. By applying personalization of knowledge, we do not have an intention of neglecting the institutions; instead we are trying to remove the obscurity of Islamic traditional methodology of teaching-learning process through which we can reject the enlightenment⁹ theory. This theory is based on the concept, that says nothing could be more personalized (Cullingford& Gunn, 2005), which is contradictory to the Islamic point of view. According to Islam, depersonalization in everything is not acceptable at all being the exemplary life style of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was in a personalized manner on the basis of situations. The messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) instructed the personality looking to the context and that was the characteristic of *tharbiyah*, the true knowledge transmission.

Secondly, in order the *murabbi* to be relevantized as a character of good educator, the institutions should give individual freedom for the Muslim culture of thinking. It would enhance the possibilities of the integrated and interactive approach of the teacher and the taught. Then for a Muslim teacher, the chance for involving in the Islamic spirit of productive knowledge transformation increases and he can change his identity,

⁹ The Enlightenment [sing.]: The period in the 18th century when many writers and scientists began to argue that science and reason were more important than religion and tradition (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of current English (7th Ed.) (2000), Wehmeier: Oxford: Oxford University press.

of which we mentioned above, from a mere form of educator or teacher of the institution into being a character of *tharbiyah*, the educator with purified mind and soul.

Thirdly, establishing a system of education in Islamic institutions with which the curricula would be inclining to the theory of experiential learning process and making *murabbi* as a part of it. Being *murabbi* performs as an experience to everyone by creating an image of self-narrating structure of humanity. The theory of experiential learning defined by Kolb (1986) as a learning process “in which knowledge is created through transformation of experience” is a possible way of practicing *murabbi* by involving the followers in an otherness designed by his creator, Allah. Changing the theory into an entity that is practicable in the way of Islamic tradition, we can experience the progressive culture of educating the people with a spirit of religious values.

Conclusion

The present paper has tried to make a comprehensive analysis of how should the tradition with the Islamic philosophy of *murabbi* be approached in the context of globalization of education. The process of learning has to be revisited based upon the situation of the teacher and the taught. The depersonalization of the knowledge, looking from a different point of view, is an adversely affecting phenomenon in certain contexts, while an idea can be done so in order to avoid the sense of possessiveness in the person who contributed. The personalized form of knowledge, within which an ideal *murabbi* lives, has a chance to be re-established in the modern system of education throughout the world. In an era of an education form, that is considered as a good or a commodity to be shown for the sake of economy, the teacher along with the taught has been institutionalized, admittedly. The current terrain of knowledge formation through enlarging the space of curricula is not something that can give the true experience of morality, value and spirit of Islamic tradition. The character that should be inculcated in the person is not the thing to be taught by designing the syllabi for the educational institutions. In this context *murabbi* has some explicit messages to share with the student, who must possess the quality of merging his life with the former. By suggesting the ways of relevantizing the character of *murabbi*, we have to move further focusing on how he should be characterized with a philosophical interpretation, rather than concentrating on the usual applications of education in the living world. Moreover, the arguments concerning *murabbi* as an advocate of inductive intellect, is to be in an ongoing discussion in world of our educational philosophy.

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