

In the Name of Allah; Most-Merciful, Most Compassionate.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Purpose of Education

Education is a process of understanding the world based upon the divine and eternal sources of knowledge given to humankind by God, the All-Knowing and Bestower of guidance. We engage in this process so as to be a recipient of His mercy, to draw near to Him, to be entered into the eternal Paradise and to be blessed with seeing His most-beloved face (about which there is no comparison or likeness). Education is thus the seeking of knowledge for His sake and in desiring His bestowal of bounties, temporal and eternal. Individual development includes knowledge of inward and outward acts of worship, while it also includes gaining knowledge of worldly sciences. Allah teaches a supplication in the Qur'an that summarizes this principle: "O' Lord, increase me in knowledge."¹ Furthermore, the beloved Prophet (may Allah exalt his mention and protect him from every evil) taught that seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.²

The boundless nature of knowledge is such that its pursuit is an endless one, resulting in the believer continuously engaging in the process of education, be it formal or informal by contemporary standards. Education, however, can act as a double-edged sword as Allah warns against those who gather and gain knowledge yet they do not refine their character nor deepen their connection with their Creator, such "...is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people."³ As such knowledge must go hand in hand with internal and external development, the reality of such education is known only between the believer and his or her Lord as "actions are but by their intentions."⁴

¹ Qur'an 20:114.

² Narrated by ibn Majah, graded as hasan. This narration is inclusive of men and women and necessitates that a certain level of knowledge be acquired by all, however specification in certain fields is only obligatory upon some (a community obligation).

³ Qur'an 62:5.

⁴ Narrated by in Sahih al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

Process of Education

Teaching is a process of learning; it is revision, refinement and engaging new ideas. Educating on one level, therefore, can be understood in knowing the purpose of education itself. In addition to that, educating is a process greatly rewarded by Allah, and is part and parcel of the above-mentioned requirement of acting upon knowledge. The noble example for humankind, the seal of the Prophets (may Allah exalt his mention and protect him from every evil), was sent as a teacher.⁵ As the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, a person is not learned until he acts upon what he knows.⁶ One aspect of that enacting is educating, and that, by Prophetic command, each individual is to convey what he or she acquires of knowledge, even if that amount be small.⁷ About knowledge and teaching, abu Musa al Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Whoever is granted knowledge by Allah, let him teach it, but he should not speak of that of which he has n knowledge, lest he become one of those who make things up and thus go beyond the pale of Islam."⁸

Allah knows best.

⁵ Narrated in Sunan ibn Majah.

⁶ Narrated in ibn Hibban.

⁷ Narrated in Sahih al Bukhari.

⁸ Recorded in al Tabaqat 4/107.