



Ibn Qayyim's Taxonomy and John Dewey's Pragmatism, Islamic Pedagogy, and Western Educational Thought: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to respond to the question: What are some of the parallels between Ibn Qayyim and John Dewey's position with regards to education philosophy and its implication? This qualitative paper uses an interdisciplinary approach to bring out different ideas about education in the modern world. It then suggests a more nuanced, all-around approach to education that looks at both problems and best practices. Synthesizing different education traditions is an attempt to develop a solid understanding of education with reference to the multidimensional contribution of education across cultures. Though Ibn Qayyim (Islamic pedagogy) and Dewey (western secular education) belong to different education traditions, they were both conscious of the application of multi-dimensional approach to education, with reference to the transformative framework of education.

Keywords: Ibn Qayyim, John Dewey, Ibn Qayyim's Taxonomy, Islamic Pedagogy, Comparative Education, Ibn Qayyim's Education Thought

Introduction

Comparative education is an important field for rebuilding the current body of research on education in order to incubate new models, with the potential to fill the gaps in current education. Indeed, medieval Islamic pedagogy is often neglected in mapping out contemporary education philosophies, though some of its values have inspired prominent Western philosophers and educators to develop their theories and hypotheses. By synthesizing both models of education, this paper seeks to reconstruct Islamic pedagogy so that scholars and readers can recognize its importance in addressing education ideas and challenges. This study compares Ibn Qayyim's writings on education with Dewey's teachings, and it asks the question: what are some of the parallels between Ibn Qayyim and John Dewey's positions with regards to education philosophy and its implications?

Methodology:

This paper is a descriptive comparative study. It employs a qualitative research design. It addresses the gap in contemporary education, with reference to the lack of resources from Islamic educational thought, with the potential to address world contemporary education nuisances. By bringing Ibn Qayyim's education values along with those of contemporary western educator John Dewey, it is indeed an attempt to draw attention to Islamic educational thought and its importance in dealing with world education challenges. The interdisciplinary method seeks to approach the topic from the perspective of another tradition, thus putting forward a comprehensive framework for education that addresses its best practices and challenges.

The goal of this descriptive comparative study is to foreground education values forwarded by two important philosophers belonging to different schools and areas: the American philosopher Dewey (October 20, 1859–June 1, 1952) and the late mediaeval Muslim philosopher Ibn Qayyim (January 29 1292–September 15 1350 CE / 691 AH–751 AH) to enrich education practices.

Ibn Qayyim and Dewey's perspective on human-being

For Ibn Qayyim, human-being is distinguished among all other creatures. Man is not an individual creature but rather a social being, endowed with reasoning, language, and a good image. Language makes human beings social and relational creatures with certain needs for socialising (Alhajaji, 1988).

However, Ibn Qayyim stressed in his book (*Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah*) that man is a combination of three elements: mind, heart, and body. Humans are expected to carry out cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual actions to reach perfection. Ibn Qayyim stressed the importance of interaction among the factors he listed in order to achieve perfection—or, as it is commonly known in Islamic pedagogy, happiness.

Dewey's perspective on human beings

Similar to Ibn Qayyim, Dewey views man as a social being capable of understanding his environment and problems. But for Dewey, man is as a biological being is himself the cause of his development. For Dewey, the world is changeable; thus, man should be equipped with the skills that make him adoptable and live a happy life. Hence, for Dewey, human beings are inherently dynamic and unique.

Dewey, unlike Ibn Qayyim, does not see any other element that makes man apart from mind and body; the spiritual world has no influence over man. However, Ibn Qayyim thinks that the soul is the most influential element in building man's character and happiness. Spiritual education must be incorporated into Ibn Qayyim's curriculum. Ibn Qayyim's disruptive education theory reconstructs man's interaction with psychological crises. With no spiritual education, human beings are easily misguided and attacked by psychological problems.

Meaning of education for Ibn Qayyim

Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim's teacher, had an impact on his paradigm of thought by emphasizing the Qur'an and al-Hadith. Ibn Qayyim is known as a 'salafist' and puritanical cleric. Ibn Qayyim's educational philosophy is directed towards obtaining real happiness along with the mission of the content of the Qur'an and the Hadith in the Hereafter without rejecting real world happiness, though it is pseudo (Barid & Jayidi, 2020). Education in Ibn Qayyim's conceptualization is rooted in Islamic and Arabic terminology, which is 'Rabbah,' meaning growth and development.

Also in his book (Tuhfatul Mawdud bi Ahkam al-Mawlu) A Gift to the Loved One Regarding the Rulings of the Newborn, Ibn Qayyim connected education with 'tahdib', with more implications for adjusting the behavior. Education, in its core sense, is the practice of fostering good manners. This methodology of good manners promotion is one way to recognize God's grandness and his name (Al-Hakim), the wise. Ibn Qayyim argues that the purpose of education in general is to maintain human nature and save it from deviance and misguidance. Besides, education is to instill noble manners and discharge the bad ones, to obtain happiness in the real world and in the hereafter (Ibn Qayyim, 2009, as cited in Makmudi).

For Ibn Qayyim, three elements are required for achieving sound education: spirit, mind, and body. In his education theory, man is a combination of spirit, mind, and body, and each element has a critical function in facilitating the learning journey. The interface of those elements is highly desired for meaningful learning to happen, mainly in early childhood education, with the potential to ensure a healthy educational journey free from any nuisances.

Meaning of education for Dewey

Dewey was known as a philosopher of change, making constant attempts to apply Darwin's evolutionary theories to all areas of philosophy. Dewey championed progressive education and was an advocate of social learning (Slaughter, 2009) and progressive education, which is a view that emphasises the need for 'learning by doing'. That is, any learning that is not based on experience is a waste of time, with no hope of cultivating students' real needs. Along with that, Dewey's philosophy was also labeled pragmatism, which is the belief that reality is to be experienced.

Dewey insisted on the adoption of collaborative learning, allowing all the actors to have an equal voice in the learning experience. For Dewey, education is meant to empower and foster social justice, with the goal of generating active citizens equipped with the necessary dispositions to lead and make positive change. Dewey argues that education is a critical component of social and moral maturity (Schiro, 2012). For him, effective education is achieved primarily through social interactions where the school should be considered a social institution (Flinders & Thornton, 2013). Thus school should serve as 'miniature community and embryonic society.'

In contrast to traditional classrooms, Dewey thought that schools and classrooms should be representative of real-life situations, allowing students to participate in learning activities interchangeably and flexibly in a variety of social settings (Dewey, 1938). He further argued that education is a "process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Flinders & Thornton, 2013). Ibn Qayyim shares with Dewey the societal dimension of learning, though Dewey, as a pragmatist, insists that education should be a mirror of life situations, not a preparation for future jobs.

Goals of education

Ibn Qayyim, in his book (Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah), argues that the goals of 'tarbiyah' are the promotion of good behaviors and manners. Education is the process by which children adjust their behaviors and pick up the best manners. Education is linked with happiness; education is a bridge with the potential to guide pupils to a happy life, which is synonymous with God's path.

Ibn Qayyim was a strong supporter of enhancing children's talent from an early age. He pointed out an essential aspect of education, which is 'tawjih' or guidance. Education, particularly a young learner's education, is meant to detect one's talent and tendency, with the potential to help the learner champion this particular skill, craft, or knowledge. Ibn Qayyim connected learning to personal tendencies, skills, and intelligences, with the goal of offering best practices for improvement.

The in-depth understanding of human basic needs was translated into Ibn Qayyim's education goals. He coined six types of education to help individuals become better citizens with the ability to recognize the difference between good and bad. For Ibn Qayyim, different types of education should punctuate the curriculum to create an individual who is useful for himself and the community as a whole. Those types of education or disciplines are: faith, psychological, sociological, spiritual, physical, cognitive/critical, and sexual education.

Dewey's goals of education

Dewey addressed broad questions about the purposes of education. How can education serve society and people? How can education be useful for individual life? Dewey wrote that "the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education... the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth" (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 107). Growth was a critical element in Dewey's perspective on education. Dewey again defended "growth as aim and ideal" in education (Dewey, 1921–1983). Growth was a vital element in Dewey's education goals.

Dewey shares with Ibn Qayyim the element of growth as a major goal in the education process. He referred to education as a "social need and function", and a "process of living and growth," which combines both social and individual dimensions that are equally dependent on each other. Hence, education is a way to enable individuals to play an effective role as members of a human community or society (Gautam, 2018).

According to Dewey, good education should have both a societal purpose and a purpose for the individual student. Educators should provide a learning context that better enables students to contribute to society. Dewey was a staunch critic of traditional education for lacking any holistic understanding of students and having no hope of connecting students to their own environment (Gautman, 2018). Both Dewey and Ibn Qayyim had a holistic vision of education that connected cognitive abilities with emotional and social aspects. Indeed, Ibn Qayyim, unlike Dewey, views spiritual education as significantly important in enhancing the learner's character.

Ibn Qayyim's learning taxonomy

Ibn Qayyim in his book (Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah), classified learning dynamics into four stages: **listening, comprehension, mastering, and dissemination**.

The first stage is the listening stage. In this stage, Ibn Qayyim insists on active listening, which has the potential to usher in active learning. The scholar connects listening to the heart with the potential to build a high level of interaction between the learning content and the heart of the learner. This strategy helps the course of learning not to be a dry process but a complex operation that evolves the heart, which makes education activities highly conscientious and thoughtful. In this context of active learning, Ibn Qayyim insists on asking the question.

The second stage targets understanding the learning content. Comprehension is an important element in Ibn Qayyim's conceptualization of learning. In general, Ibn Qayyim associates understanding with asking the question. For him, learning without the opportunity to ask the question is not learning at all.

The third stage is labeled the content mastery stage. It is a stage where the information is well memorised, fully understanding its implication. This phase has the implication of well-memorised content. It is a transitional phase between the first and last stages. The learners become more aware of the details of the content and its different implications.

The last stage is dissemination. It is the practice part of learning. For Ibn Qayyim, the last stage of learning is the most important because of its usefulness in mastering the knowledge and skills learned. Learning for Ibn Qayyim is transformative and evokes community practice of learning. Nevertheless, Ibn Qayyim's learning stage classification in his book (Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah) predates Bloom's taxonomy, which is a set of three hierarchical models employed for categorising educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity.

Ibn Qayyim's learning by teaching model

Along with that, Ibn Qayyim, in his book (Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah), pointed out the effects of learning by teaching (protégé) and its implications for mastering and comprehending the learning content. Learning is enhanced by providing teaching opportunities for the learners. This can lead to increased meta-cognitive processing, making students more aware of various parts of their learning. Plus, it puts the learner at the heart of the learning process, which boosts their motivation and feelings of competence and autonomy.

Ibn Qayyim, in his book (Miftah Dar As-Sa'adah), insists on learning by teaching. He demonstrated the importance of microteaching in mastering knowledge. The scholar uses the analogy of the pond to depict the power of practice in knowledge expansion. The more it is used, the more it grows. The same is true for learning; the more learners put knowledge into practice, the more they grow.

Ibn Qayyim with influence by Islamic pedagogy calls for the societal dimension of learning, with the potential to transform not only the learner but the community as a whole. Learning from Ibn Qayyim is a call to action and is transformative by nature. Thus, learners are prepared to champion community change. Ibn Qayyim and Islamic pedagogy in general are inherently connected to social change, with reference to human beings' task as God's vicegerent. Similarly, Dewey's curriculum insists on four aspects that are rooted in his pragmatic philosophy of learning: psychological, collaborative, democratic, and societal, with the potential to raise social consciousness. Thus, Dewey's education is to foster social and psychological well-being by providing them with the necessary skills, facilitating their societal integration.

Conclusion

This paper aims to combine the educational philosophies of two different schools of thought run by two outstanding philosophers, Ibn Qayyim and Dewey. However, both scholars attempted to reflect on their realities by offering a new educational model to solve education problems in their communities. Yet both philosophers agree that man is a social creature endowed with unique features that enable him to grow. Both thinkers considered growth to be a crucial component of education, though they may have had different perspectives on how to achieve this growth. Growth for Dewey's legacy is mostly experiential growth. Dewey's experiential methodology in education is rooted in pragmatism, with some focus on naturalism, behaviorism, and individualism and a lesser degree on moral values.

Ibn Qayyim, who draws inspiration from Islamic pedagogy, connects growth more to the soul, mind, and body. Furthermore, Ibn Qayyim insists on 'ruhaniyat' spiritual growth in cultivating man's journey towards knowledge and happiness. The best knowledge for Ibn Qayyim is the knowledge that guides individuals to God and discovers his greatness. Happiness is found in God's path, and knowledge is the compass to God.

However, Dewey links man's happiness with the acquisition of useful knowledge (pragmatism) that makes him understand his changing environment and adapt to it. Dewey was more a supporter of pragmatism and the utility of education. Anyhow, both educators emphasized moral education and its importance in child development. John Dewey, along with his emphasis on moral education, called for experiential learning; the best education is the one that fosters practical functioning. He also connects education to big questions of social justice and equality.

Regarding education theory, Ibn Qayyim put forward his own learning taxonomy, which is similar to the Bloom taxonomy, and he also emphasized learning by teaching method. Ibn Qayyim suggested four stages of learning dynamics: listening, comprehension, mastering, and dissemination. Dewey, on the other hand, called for adopting learning by doing, with the potential to equip the students with the practice skills to make life tasks easier.

Both Dewey and Ibn Qayyim emphasized the role of education in discovering students' talents and capabilities while drawing attention to students' individual differences. Dewey and Ibn Qayyim share the experiential implications of learning. The scholars' holistic vision of education, particularly connecting learning to students' needs, inspired the utility of education, with the potential to place learners at the heart of the learning process. In a nutshell, this paper aims to respond to some critical questions to develop an alternative educational model to enhance best practices and extend the current framework and literature on contemporary world education. Hence, its findings would contribute to establishing a holistic approach with the potential to address humanity and world education challenges.

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