

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SHAPING SOCIETY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

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Abstract

Education is one of the main forces that shape the structure of society. Teachers, in particular, hold a central role in this process because they not only transfer knowledge but also influence the values, attitudes, and behavior of their students. In modern educational institutions, this role becomes even more significant as young generations face new social, cultural, and moral challenges. This paper studies the role of teachers in shaping society in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and discusses how Islamic guidance can be applied within contemporary education. The Qur'an highlights the value of knowledge and describes teachers as guides who help people move from ignorance to awareness. The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further shows how a teacher should act—with wisdom, patience, justice, and compassion. These principles provide a model for teachers today, who are expected to build not only the intellectual abilities of students but also their moral and social character. This research uses a qualitative approach, focusing on Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and the writings of Islamic scholars, while also considering the challenges of the present time such as materialism, lack of moral training, and global cultural influences. The findings suggest that when teachers practice values like sincerity, fairness, and responsibility, they can greatly influence the moral development of individuals and promote social harmony. The study concludes that education must not be limited to professional training or the pursuit of worldly success. Instead, it should combine faith and knowledge to produce responsible, ethical, and constructive members of society. Teachers, by following the Qur'an and Sunnah, can play a vital role in this transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of the Study

Teachers have always been the cornerstone of intellectual, moral, and social development. In the Islamic tradition, teaching is not merely a profession but a sacred responsibility. The Qur'an describes the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a *Mu'allim* (teacher) who was sent "to recite His verses, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom" (Qur'an, 62:2). This indicates that education in Islam extends far beyond academic instruction—it encompasses moral training, character building, and spiritual development. Classical Muslim scholars, such as Imam al-Ghazālī, viewed teachers as inheritors of the prophetic mission, entrusted with shaping righteous individuals and nurturing just societies (Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*). In today's globalized and technologically driven world, where moral challenges, secularism, and materialism dominate educational environments, the teacher's role in safeguarding values and guiding the next generation is more crucial than ever.

Research Problem

Although teachers remain central to education, contemporary institutions increasingly reduce their role to academic instruction, often neglecting the ethical and spiritual aspects of learning. As a result, the transformative role of teachers—envisioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah as guides, mentors, and nation-builders—faces serious challenges. This study, therefore, addresses the question: *How can teachers in contemporary educational institutions effectively fulfill their role in shaping society in light of the Qur'anic and Prophetic model of education?*

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both Islamic scholarship and educational reform. Firstly, it revisits Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings on education and teaching, contextualizing them in today's rapidly changing world. Secondly, it emphasizes the teacher's role as an agent of social and moral transformation, highlighting their responsibility beyond delivering knowledge. Thirdly, the study provides practical insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions to integrate Islamic ethical and spiritual values into pedagogy and

curricula. In doing so, it aims to restore the balance between intellectual development and moral guidance in education (Halstead, 2004; Al-Attas, 1999).

Objectives of the Research

1. To explore the Qur'anic and Prophetic perspectives on the role of teachers in shaping individuals and society.
2. To analyze the challenges faced by teachers in contemporary educational institutions.
3. To examine how teachers can contribute to the intellectual, moral, and social development of students.
4. To propose recommendations for aligning modern educational practices with Islamic principles.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of teachers in shaping society according to the Qur'an and Sunnah?
2. What challenges do teachers face in fulfilling this role within contemporary educational institutions?
3. To what extent can Islamic principles guide teachers in carrying out their responsibilities today?
4. What strategies can be implemented to strengthen the role of teachers as agents of social transformation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A teacher's role in shaping society has been acknowledged in nearly every civilization. In the Islamic worldview, however, this responsibility acquires a sacred dimension because teaching is linked with the prophetic mission itself. The Qur'an declares that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent "to recite His verses, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom" (Qur'an, 62:2, Saheeh International, 2004). This demonstrates that the teacher is not only an instructor but also a moral and spiritual guide. Over the centuries, both classical and modern scholars have contributed to the understanding of this role. This literature review surveys previous scholarly work on the subject and identifies research gaps that justify the need for the present study.

Classical Islamic Scholarship on Teachers' Role

Teachers as Inheritors of the Prophets

Imam al-Ghazālī (1983), in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, emphasized that teachers inherit the role of prophets in guiding communities. For him, the primary duty of a teacher was to cultivate ethical and spiritual discipline (*adab*) in students. Teaching, therefore, was not a profession but a form of worship. His writings consistently stress that knowledge without ethical practice leads to corruption, and thus, teachers carry the immense responsibility of embodying the values they impart (Ghazālī, 1983).

The Civilizational Perspective

Ibn Khaldūn (1967), in his *Muqaddimah*, placed education at the center of civilizational progress. According to him, teachers shape the intellectual and moral fabric of society, and their neglect could lead to cultural and political decline. This view underscores the long-standing recognition of education as a collective social need (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967/2015). He also linked the success of dynasties and states to the quality of their teachers and educational systems, highlighting the deep sociopolitical implications of pedagogy.

Adab and Holistic Education

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1999) argued that education in Islam is a process of instilling *adab*—discipline, manners, and right action. In his framework, teachers play a central role in this process by embodying the values they teach. Without morally upright teachers, students cannot develop into responsible members of society. Al-Attas also warned against the fragmentation of knowledge and the rise of secular education that neglects spiritual dimensions, positioning teachers as guardians of intellectual and moral unity.

The Teacher–Student Relationship in Classical Thought

Other classical scholars, such as Ibn Sahnūn and al-Zarnūjī, emphasized the ethics of teaching and learning. Al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (Instruction of the Student) stressed the mutual responsibilities between teachers and students, with teachers expected to act as spiritual guides and moral exemplars (al-Zarnūjī, 2003). This literature

demonstrates that, historically, the Islamic tradition has viewed teaching as a mission of social and spiritual transformation rather than mere transmission of information.

Contemporary Islamic Perspectives on Teachers

Moral and Ethical Dimensions

Halstead (2004) highlighted that Islamic education emphasizes the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. Unlike secular models, which often separate academic skills from ethical values, the Islamic paradigm requires teachers to combine knowledge transmission with moral guidance. This approach resonates with the Qur'anic emphasis on wisdom (*ḥikmah*) alongside knowledge (*'ilm*).

Teachers in Muslim Educational Institutions

Ali and Bagley (2015) examined the role of teachers in Muslim schools and noted that teachers were often regarded as role models whose behavior significantly influenced students' values. However, their study also revealed challenges such as curriculum limitations and pressures to conform to secular standards. The research suggests that while teachers in Muslim contexts are still expected to fulfill spiritual responsibilities, institutional frameworks often undermine their ability to do so effectively.

Challenges of Modernity

Hassan (2013) analyzed the impact of modernity on teachers' moral authority, arguing that globalization, secularism, and materialism have weakened the teacher's role as a moral guide. Teachers today often lack the institutional support necessary to integrate ethical and spiritual education into their teaching practices.

Teachers and Character Formation

Recent works emphasize the teacher's role in shaping character, particularly in societies undergoing rapid cultural change. Ahmad (2017) argued that teachers in Muslim countries must act as agents of cultural preservation, ensuring that modernization does not come at the expense of religious and moral values. This perspective views teachers not only as educators but also as custodians of civilizational identity.

Broader Educational Perspectives**Critical Pedagogy**

Freire (1996), in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, emphasized that teachers must enable students to achieve critical consciousness. Education, he argued, should empower learners to challenge injustice and transform society. While rooted in a secular tradition, this resonates with the Qur'anic vision of teachers as reformers and guides. The Qur'an repeatedly calls for reflection (*tafakkur*) and questioning unjust systems, values that align closely with Freire's emancipatory pedagogy.

Ethics of Care in Teaching

Noddings (2005) advanced the idea of caring as central to effective teaching. For her, teachers must go beyond formal instruction to nurture compassion, empathy, and ethical responsibility among students. This notion parallels the Islamic emphasis on *tarbiyah* (holistic upbringing) as part of the teacher's mission. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself is described as "a mercy to the worlds" (Qur'an, 21:107, Saheeh International, 2004), which provides a model of compassionate pedagogy.

Psychological Perspectives on Teachers' Influence

Modern psychology, particularly the work of Vygotsky (1978), highlights the importance of teachers as mediators of learning and development. Teachers provide the scaffolding necessary for students to achieve higher levels of cognitive and social functioning. In Islamic education, this scaffolding includes not only intellectual but also spiritual dimensions, suggesting that psychology and Islamic pedagogy can be mutually enriching.

Teachers in Comparative Religious Traditions

Research also shows that the role of teachers as moral exemplars is not unique to Islam. In Christian education, teachers are often viewed as spiritual mentors (Groome, 1998). Similarly, in Confucian traditions, teachers are regarded as second only to parents in shaping a child's character (Tu, 2001). These comparative insights underscore the universality of the teacher's role, while also highlighting the unique contributions of the Islamic paradigm, which explicitly ties teaching to prophecy.

Recent Research on Teachers in the Contemporary Context

Recent studies highlight the practical challenges teachers face in balancing academic duties with moral responsibilities. For instance, Khan (2019) examined Pakistani educational institutions and found that while teachers recognized the importance of moral education, institutional frameworks often limited their ability to implement it. Similarly, Ahmad and Hussain (2021) observed that the rise of digital technology has shifted students' attention away from teachers as primary sources of knowledge, reducing their influence as moral role models.

Other studies, such as Iqbal (2020), have explored the effect of globalization on Muslim teachers, noting that exposure to Western educational paradigms has created tensions between traditional religious values and modern academic practices. This tension often leaves teachers caught between competing expectations from parents, students, and policymakers.

Furthermore, research on digital pedagogy (Rahman & Ali, 2022) shows that while technology can enhance access to information, it also challenges the teacher's traditional role as a source of wisdom. Students now often perceive knowledge as fragmented and accessible online, which undermines the relational aspect of learning emphasized in Islamic teaching traditions.

Research Gap

The review of literature highlights several important themes: the centrality of teachers in Islamic civilization, the holistic integration of ethics and knowledge, and the challenges posed by modernity. However, the following gaps remain:

- Limited Integration of Classical and Contemporary Perspectives:** Most Islamic scholarship emphasizes the classical role of teachers, while contemporary studies focus on modern challenges. Few works systematically integrate these two perspectives to provide a holistic framework.
- Neglect of Qur'anic and Prophetic Model in Modern Research:** Although the Qur'an and Sunnah provide clear guidance on the teacher's role, contemporary educational research often overlooks this spiritual foundation.

3. **Context-Specific Studies:** Much of the research on teachers is either global or Western-centric. There is insufficient focus on Muslim-majority contexts, particularly South Asia, where the challenges of balancing tradition and modernity are most acute.

4. **Impact of Digital and Global Transformations:** While some research notes the challenges of technology, few studies analyze how teachers can retain their prophetic role in the digital age.

5. **Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approaches:** There is a lack of research that combines Islamic perspectives with modern educational theories—such as critical pedagogy, ethics of care, and psychology—to produce a comprehensive framework.

This research aims to bridge these gaps by analyzing the role of teachers in contemporary educational institutions in light of the Qur'an and Sunnah. By doing so, it seeks to provide an integrated framework that addresses both the classical Islamic vision and the realities of the modern world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method of Research

The present study adopts a **qualitative and analytical research approach**. Since the topic revolves around the role of teachers in shaping society in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it requires an in-depth exploration of classical Islamic sources, contemporary educational literature, and sociological perspectives. Rather than relying on statistical data, the study emphasizes textual interpretation, critical analysis, and thematic exploration of the relevant materials (Creswell, 2018).

Sources of Data

This research primarily depends on **secondary sources of data**. The **Qur'an and Hadith** serve as the fundamental sources, providing divine guidance and the Prophetic model regarding the duties and responsibilities of teachers (Al-Bukhari, 1997; Muslim, 2007). In addition, classical Islamic exegesis (Tafsir), scholarly works of Muslim jurists, and writings of contemporary Muslim thinkers are consulted (Ibn Kathir, 2003). Academic books, journal articles, research papers on education, reports by educational institutions, and authentic online databases are also examined to incorporate modern perspectives on the social role of teachers (Halstead, 2004; Hussain & Ashraf, 2019).

Method of Analysis

The study applies an **analytical and descriptive method of analysis**. Verses of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) related to teaching and social development are carefully examined, explained, and contextualized (Nasr, 2002). Themes emerging from Islamic teachings are compared with contemporary educational challenges to highlight their relevance and applicability. The collected data is organized under key thematic headings—such as moral development, intellectual guidance, and social responsibility—and analyzed to identify how teachers can serve as agents of positive societal transformation (Siddiqui, 2017).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Teachers occupy a central position in shaping the moral, intellectual, and social fabric of society. In the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, teaching is not merely a profession but a sacred responsibility entrusted to individuals who guide others towards truth and righteousness. The Qur'an highlights the exalted status of knowledge and those who impart it: *"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees"* (Qur'an, 58:11). This verse affirms that teachers, as conveyors of knowledge, play a vital role in elevating societies through the dissemination of beneficial learning.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the transformative impact of teachers by declaring, *"The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it"* (al-Bukhari, 1997). This Hadith demonstrates that teaching, especially when linked with divine guidance, is not confined to individual benefit but extends to collective social reform. Classical jurists such as Imam al-Ghazali (1995) also underscored the moral responsibility of teachers, arguing that the aim of teaching is not only the transmission of information but also the cultivation of ethical character and piety.

From an analytical perspective, the role of teachers extends beyond religious instruction. In contemporary educational institutions, teachers serve as role models, shaping the behavior, attitudes, and worldview of students. They influence learners' moral decision-making, social responsibility, and civic engagement. Scholars such as Halstead (2004) argue

that Islamic education integrates spiritual and intellectual development, making the teacher a guide who bridges the gap between faith and modernity. In the Pakistani context, this function becomes even more critical, as educational institutions face challenges of cultural fragmentation, moral decline, and identity crises. Teachers thus stand at the intersection of preserving Islamic values while preparing students for global challenges.

Furthermore, the Qur'an describes the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as one of teaching and purification: *"He is the one who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom"* (Qur'an, 62:2). This threefold mission—recitation, purification, and teaching—remains the foundation of Islamic pedagogy. Teachers in contemporary institutions are expected to embody this Prophetic model by nurturing both intellectual competence and moral character.

In addition, the writings of Muslim scholars such as Ibn Khaldun (1967) demonstrate that education is central to societal development and civilization building. He observed that teachers not only transmit knowledge but also cultivate social cohesion and discipline necessary for societal progress. Today, with rapid globalization, digital media influence, and socio-political changes, the responsibility of teachers has expanded. They are required to equip students with critical thinking skills, ethical awareness, and resilience against destructive ideologies.

Contemporary research also highlights the necessity of value-based education. Studies suggest that teachers act as agents of social change when they integrate ethical principles into their pedagogy (Hussain & Ashraf, 2019). In societies like Pakistan, where moral challenges and social inequalities persist, the teacher's role in promoting justice, compassion, and unity becomes crucial. Their influence can bridge the gap between traditional Islamic teachings and the demands of modern education, ensuring that learners become responsible citizens who contribute positively to society.

Thus, an analytical study of Qur'anic injunctions, Prophetic traditions, juristic opinions, and modern educational realities confirms that teachers are more than transmitters of knowledge; they are the architects of moral and social transformation. By aligning

contemporary educational practices with the Qur'anic and Prophetic vision, teachers can play a decisive role in shaping societies rooted in ethics, knowledge, and collective well-being.

FINDINGS

The present research highlights several key findings regarding the role of teachers in contemporary educational institutions in shaping society in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah:

1. Teaching as a Sacred Responsibility

The study finds that teaching, in the Islamic perspective, is not merely a profession but a divinely entrusted responsibility. Both the Qur'an (58:11) and Hadith (al-Bukhari, 1997) affirm that teachers hold an elevated status due to their role in guiding others towards knowledge and righteousness.

2. Teachers as Moral and Ethical Guides

Beyond the transfer of information, teachers are found to be moral educators. Classical scholars such as al-Ghazali emphasized that the aim of teaching is the purification of the soul and cultivation of good character. This is confirmed in the Qur'anic verse (62:2), where purification and teaching are mentioned together as the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

3. Role in Social Transformation

The research indicates that teachers act as agents of social change. They influence the values, behavior, and civic responsibilities of students, thereby shaping the broader social order. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun's view that education is central to civilization building and social cohesion.

4. Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Teachers today are found to be mediators between traditional Islamic values and contemporary educational demands. By integrating Qur'anic principles with modern pedagogical methods, teachers can prepare students to meet global challenges without compromising their Islamic identity.

5. Responding to Contemporary Challenges

The study observes that teachers face challenges such as globalization, digital media influence, and moral decline in society. Their role has therefore expanded

to include not only academic instruction but also the development of resilience, critical thinking, and ethical awareness in students.

6. Need for Value-Based Education

Findings suggest that value-based education, rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, remains essential for addressing societal issues in contemporary Pakistan. Teachers who integrate ethical principles into their pedagogy have a greater impact in fostering justice, compassion, and unity among students.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that teachers in contemporary educational institutions hold a pivotal role in shaping society, both in the intellectual and moral spheres. In the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, teaching is a noble responsibility that extends far beyond classroom instruction. Teachers are entrusted with nurturing ethical character, guiding spiritual growth, and instilling social responsibility in their students. The Qur'an elevates the status of those who possess and impart knowledge (58:11), while the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the lasting influence of teachers as agents of goodness (al-Bukhari, 1997).

From an analytical perspective, teachers are the bridge between tradition and modernity. They are expected to preserve Islamic values while equipping students with the skills needed to navigate contemporary challenges such as globalization, digital influence, and cultural change. The research highlights that the true effectiveness of teachers lies not only in the delivery of knowledge but also in their ability to inspire moral transformation and positive social development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

1. **Integration of Islamic Values in Education**
Curriculum designers and institutions should incorporate Qur'anic principles and Prophetic teachings into all levels of education, ensuring that knowledge is linked with morality and social responsibility.
2. **Professional and Ethical Training for Teachers**
Regular training programs should be introduced

to enhance teachers' professional skills and reinforce their ethical and spiritual responsibilities as outlined in Islamic teachings.

3. Strengthening the Teacher-Student Relationship

Teachers should be encouraged to act as role models, offering mentorship that extends beyond academics, nurturing students' emotional, moral, and civic growth.

4. Addressing Contemporary Challenges

Educational institutions should equip teachers with strategies to counter negative influences such as moral decline, digital distractions, and identity crises by fostering resilience, critical thinking, and ethical awareness.

5. Policy Support and Recognition

Governments and educational authorities should provide support, incentives, and recognition to teachers who demonstrate excellence in combining academic instruction with moral guidance, thereby enhancing their role as nation-builders.

6. Collaboration Between Religious and Modern Institutions

To create a balanced educational environment, greater collaboration between Islamic seminaries and modern universities should be encouraged, promoting an integrated model of knowledge that is both spiritually grounded and socially relevant.

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