

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEACHER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GREAT WESTERN AND ISLAMIC THINKERS AND EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Considering the spiritual influence and the role of a teacher as a model among students, in order to be successful in raising and educating his students, he must be aware of and commit to the principles, moral duties, and views of great thinkers and education experts. The moral and behavioral traits and characteristics that a teacher must possess are among the things that have always been of interest to education experts throughout history. This paper aims at investigating the moral characteristics of a teacher from the perspective of some great Western and Islamic thinkers. The method of this research is library research, reviewing sources, and collecting information. The results of the research show that most of the world's thinkers and educators consider personality components to be the most important characteristics of a good teacher.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, education is of great importance and both the educator and the learner must adhere to some principles and values, and if they do not, education will not be realized in its true sense. The hesitation in the nature and essence of education compels us to commit ourselves to principles, tools, and methods so that we can be successful human beings in teaching others and in learning and teaching manners, knowledge, and skills. Curriculum and educational programs must emphasize the diverse needs of students and society at local, regional, national, and global levels in all areas of education and training (National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012). A teacher who wants to be an excellent teacher and an example for his colleagues and students in his work and profession must equip himself with characteristics and behaviors, because it is teachers and educators who shape the individuals of society intellectually, spiritually and personally. Teachers can change students through their behavior and teaching (Nazari and Heydari, 2019).

In educational systems, many people are working and their activities are directly or indirectly effective in educating students but the role of teachers is much more prominent than other people because students spend most of their time in school under their supervision. Therefore, many graduates of the traditional and new educational systems consider their personality formation to be indebted to their teachers (Khaledi, 2016).

The teacher deals with the soul of students and is therefore accepted as a popular model. Although the student has acquired a lot of knowledge and information in the family, has learned behaviors, has got used to things, and to some extent his personality has been formed, he has not yet taken a fixed form and is largely flexible and changeable (Davoodi, 2005). Students are affected by the teacher's ethics, behavior and characteristics, and identify themselves with him. Therefore, a teacher is not just a teacher, but more importantly, he is a mentor and an influential role model (Khaledi, 2016). Teaching is one of the most important and needed professions in society, and the main duty of a teacher is to educate students, which includes their development in all aspects and dimensions. Part of the teaching profession has an ethical aspect, and the fulfillment of the teacher's educational responsibility requires his adherence to the principles and

rules of the teaching profession ethics. According to Donald Butter, the importance of teacher ethics lies in its goal, which is "to perfect human beings." (Safaei Moghadam et al., 2016).

Any teacher's behavior has obvious and hidden moral meanings, that is, collective moral issues that permeate all aspects of life. Therefore, it seems that the teaching profession is a profession that has a moral responsibility and burden. Any activity by human society without considering morality will lead the way to destruction and moral vices. Since education is the official institution responsible for educating the future human beings, emphasizing morality and ethics is an inseparable issue and neglecting them will leave irreparable consequences for a generation (Feiz and Ellahi, 2021). Accordingly, determining good moral characteristics for the teaching profession is essential. The present article aims to examine and compare these moral characteristics from the perspectives of great Western and Islamic thinkers.

2. Moral characteristics of a good teacher

2.1. Perspective of Western thinkers

In the path of overcoming inability and satisfying his sense of quest, perfectionism and righteousness, man has always needed guides and leaders, who have been given various names throughout history, names such as teacher, instructor, professor, mentor and master, etc. Although the difference in name and belief, the pursuit of different goals, and the use of specific methods in education have distinguished these people from each other, the participation in the work of guidance has brought all these names and people together under one class (Ramezani et al., 2017). Among this class, there have also been those who have emerged as more successful and influential than others; among these people is the Greek Socrates.

2.1.1. Socrates

Socrates was born in Athens in 469 BC. He voluntarily and with infinite love, guided and educated the people of Athens and, without leaving any written text, established his position not only among the people of Athens at that time, but also in the scope of history, and his presence spread throughout the centuries

(Ramezani, et al., 2020). Socrates considered the main goal of education in schools and teachers to be the training of thoughtful and creative people who could use information well (Mohammadi Chaboki, et al., 2018).

Now, it seems that enumerating and explaining the characteristics of Socrates as a teacher can be helpful to concerned teachers who, on the path of conquering the hearts of students and influencing them, want to become familiar with the characteristics and pure models of teaching. Accordingly, a question arises as to what characteristics in Socrates as a teacher-philosopher led to the emergence of his moral character?

*** A determined researcher:**

Willpower and perseverance in the path of research and acquiring knowledge and understanding were an advantage for Socrates and were among his characteristics. He does not get tired of pursuing the solutions to a problem and when his efforts were fruitless he resumed another day (Gompertz, 1996). Undoubtedly, acquiring existing knowledge and solving various problems is a difficult and uneven path that cannot be traversed and overcome except with the help of patience and perseverance, a path that teachers, like Socrates, cannot avoid patiently stepping on because it is up to teachers to make new knowledge available to students by acquiring it, and to make a diligent effort to the best of their ability to solve various human problems and even discover new sciences. This patience and effort of teachers, in addition to increasing knowledge and efficiency, is effective in creating and strengthening students' positive mindsets towards teachers and following their example (Ramzani et al., 2020).

*** Gentle and gentle behavior:**

One of the characteristics mentioned about Socrates was his kindness and good nature. It has been stated that Socrates showed such kindness and gentleness that his students, and even his enemies, would not miss his classes even once (Ramazani, et al., 2020). A person who sits on the platform of speech and leadership, like Socrates, must consider the fact that behavior and actions full of kindness and gentleness increase the impact of speech; just as a strong and powerful speech is wasted by the wrong behavior of the speaker and does not leave an impression on the listener. Now, if the speaker is to be a teacher who is to engage and conquer the souls of students, this personal characteristic is one of the

things that will be very useful to him.

*** Courage:**

Another characteristic of Socrates was his courage. Apart from those who had entered into dialogue with Socrates, the people of Athens undoubtedly viewed Socrates with a different view. They looked up to him because he constantly uttered outlandish words about the most sublime matters and was not afraid of any authority, not even the masses of the people, before whom all orators and statesmen squirmed and bowed down" (Gompertz, 1996). There are also these obstacles and barriers in the path of a teacher's work, because a teacher is supposed to teach and guide to the right path; therefore, the teacher's courage and fearlessness to confront these obstacles and to express his opinions openly is a necessary and valuable quality for him.

*** Self-control:**

Another characteristic that has been reported about Socrates is his self-control and self-mastery, and his avoidance of egotism. Socrates possessed all kinds of emotional forces, and only through self-control was he able to control them (Gompertz, 1996). He was able to bring all emotional states, interests, and desires under his will.

*** Contentment:**

Another characteristic of Socrates was his contentment and simplicity of life. Socrates' wealth did not exceed five minas, which was a very small amount of money; he and his family lived in complete contentment. Contentment means being content with little and avoiding excessive demands on worldly goods; contentment in a person makes him indifferent to others, preserves his human dignity, and gives him the strength to face shortcomings and deficiencies, and brings respect and social character to the individual. By possessing this characteristic, a teacher and trainer does not become a plaything for the goals of others, and by reducing greed and preserving his own dignity, he focuses on his job and the interests of his trainees (Ramazani et al., 2020).

*** Being a listener of all opinions:**

Socrates never considered himself indifferent to hearing different opinions. In fact, Socrates believed that no statement or claim is so absurd or so baseless that we should not listen to it with an open mind and seek its correct reasons; and no opinion, no matter how unpleasant, should be ridiculed and silenced with shouting and noise (Gompertz, 1996). People who are not good listeners often

either do not have the capacity and tolerance to listen, or due to prejudice, stubbornness, arrogance and pride, they consider themselves too superior to listen to the opinions of others. Aware of the students' conditions, instead of imposing himself or instilling in their minds, Socrates tried to start teaching from where the audience is interested and to lead them to try to understand the subject or solve the problem in question (Ramazani et al., 2020). This means that Socrates knew the audience and their interests and used this knowledge in line with his goals. The necessity of knowing each of the students and learners is because, given that humans have different characteristics and are not alike, a teacher who seeks to recognize these individual differences and considers their abilities and desires can have a deep and lasting impact on the students. Because, based on this knowledge, the teacher finds it possible to coordinate the materials with the understanding, comprehension, and interest of the students, and therefore be the center of attention.

2.1.2. Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is a great representative of educational philosophy in the 18th century Europe. He was born on June 28, 1712 in Geneva, Switzerland. After living a life full of ups and downs, he passed away in 1778 at the age of 66. Sixteen years after his death, in 1794, his body was transferred to the Pantheon, the tomb of great men, by the decision of the French Revolutionary Parliament and buried next to his famous opponent Voltaire (Naghizadeh, 2010). According to Rousseau, a teacher is a good one if he has the following characteristics:

*** Harmony with the nature:**

Rousseau believes that the teacher is primarily someone who is in complete harmony with nature. The teacher who understands the educational role of the environment does not interfere with nature, but cooperates with the flow of natural forces (Gottke, 2012).

*** Appropriate behavioral interaction with students:**

Rousseau attaches great importance to creating a friendly relationship between the teacher and the students and recommends that teachers do this (Amini Mashhadi, et al., 2016).

*** Teacher being a guide and model:**

Rousseau believes that the teacher should be the students' guide and role model and not force anyone to do anything. Teachers should stop pretending and be truly good. Your good behavior should first be engraved in the memory of your students, and then it will affect their hearts (Rousseau, 1963). Rousseau considers the work of education to be more than anything else in keeping human nature from the filth of society (Hosseini and Safdarian, 2013).

2.1.3. Bob Salo

Bob Salo is the director of the Internal Motivation Program at Holy Cross College. During his forty years of teaching, he has worked as an English teacher, school psychologist, school counselor, and principal in the Plymouth Public Schools. A good teacher, according to Salo, has several characteristics:

*** Building positive relationships:**

The most essential characteristic for a teacher is to establish positive relationships with students. If the teacher is proficient in his subject, but cannot connect with the students, he will only be able to connect with highly motivated students. The rest of the students may be overwhelmed and the teacher will never be able to establish a positive and direct connection with them. A teacher should explain the importance of hard work to achieve success and help children develop academically and socially (Salo, 2021).

*** Eagerness to learn:**

Good teachers, despite their skills and qualifications, do not stop learning. They often put themselves in new situations to experience the challenge, fear,

excitement, and joy of learning again. Someone who is eager to learn, shows students that learning in itself is fun and enriching.

*** Passion for teaching:**

A good teacher expresses interest in what he teaches. The teacher must show students that he or she enjoys his or her work and help them love and appreciate what they are learning.

*** Consistency of words and actions:**

The teacher is always a model of what he teaches. He knows that he can only be effective if his words and actions are consistent. Consistency of words and actions is commendable. An authoritarian teacher who teaches democratic values does not have moral qualities. A writing teacher who has never picked up a pen or touched a keyboard cannot convince students that writing is a hobby. The most annoying thing for students is the hypocrisy of the teacher. If students are sure that they are being treated fairly, they will tolerate demanding teachers and accept poor grades but when they feel a discrepancy between the teacher's words and actions, they will not tolerate it.

*** Loving and understanding students:**

Being interested in the subject and content of the lesson is important for the teacher, but it is not enough. The teacher must care more about the students than the lesson. Above all, he should show that he cares about them and has a sense of humor, provided that his humor is respectful and does not offend the students. The teacher should unconditionally respect the children and not show destructive external control behaviors, not belittle the students, and not speak sarcastically to them.

2.2. Perspective of Islamic thinkers

Morality in all human societies is based on the school, ideology, and value system that governs their society. Among the schools that have considered morality important and have left behind a valuable collection of verses, narrations, and numerous historical examples is the religion of Islam. This issue

has been mentioned in hadiths (sayings) from the Holy Prophet (PBUH). In a famous hadith from the Holy Prophet (PBUH), we read: "I was only sent to perfect moral virtues" and in another interpretation: "I was only sent to perfect good morals." The word "only," which is used as a limitation, shows that all the goals of the Prophet's mission are summarized in this matter, namely, the perfection of

human morality (Makarem Shirazi, 2006). Thus, analyzing the educational path of the Holy Prophet can be a beacon of light for educators and parents in educating the young generation and illuminate the darkness of this difficult and risky path for them. Examining his educational style reveals the rules, principles, techniques, and educational styles used in his educational behaviors, and educators and parents can benefit from these principles and rules in their educational activities (Hosseinzadeh, 2007; Maleki Anvar, 2022).

2.2.1. The Holy Prophet

The Holy Prophet attached great importance to education in general and religious education and training in particular, and his moral characteristics and educational and training methods are also one of the unique examples of the characteristics of a good teacher and desirable educational methods.

*** Having sincerity in the teaching profession:**

One of the first customs related to the character of the Holy Prophet, which must be considered as a necessary and definite matter in education and training, is to have sincerity of intention in acquiring knowledge and teaching knowledge to others because the axis and focus of the value of knowledge and the behavior of each person depends on his intention (Maleki Anvar, 2022). Intention and motivation are so important and valuable that they must have a divine and spiritual color and flavor.

*** Creating a suitable educational environment:**

The success of education is, before any action and before anything else, due to the creation of a suitable educational environment. Creating a healthy educational environment can unconsciously lead students and children towards desired goals.

*** Loving the teaching profession:**

Undoubtedly, one of the most basic human needs after biological needs (water, food, etc.) is the need for love. This need is felt more intensely in children and adolescents due to their emotional nature. Teachers and schools also play an effective role in the formation of love in children, adolescents and young people. The influence of the teacher's personality on students cannot be denied. He can

manifest love in the students through his actions, behavior, words and attitude (Maleki Anvar, 2022). The Holy Prophet used different methods to express love to his children and grandchildren, some of which include expressing his love for them, giving gifts, joking, playing with them, patting their heads and even giving them fresh fruit (Hosseinzadeh, 2007).

*** Maintaining the dignity and human respect of learners:**

Human dignity has been considered in the Quran, the words and conduct of the prophet. Dignity means greatness, and greatness is the result of a certain productivity of a being without comparing it with others (Bagheri, 1995). One of the preferred behaviors of the holy prophet was greeting children and adolescents; because, although children and adolescents are young, they understand good and bad and understand love and respect. They love each other with their hearts and souls and move towards each other on the path of peace and security.

*** Being generous in spreading knowledge:**

A teacher should not be stingy in transferring knowledge and science to the true seeker of knowledge. He should give everything he has, in accordance with sincerity, and make it available to the learner so that he can follow the path of progress and advancement.

2.2.2. Ibn Kheldoon

Ibn Kheldoon, the great Muslim philosopher, sociologist, and historian, was born in Toos. Of the many writings of Ibn Kheldoon, only one book is available in which he has discussed the principles and methods of education and training. One of the principles and methods of upbringing from Ibn Kheldoon's perspective is to be lenient and kind to the learner. He recommends that teachers should not be strict and unkind to learners, especially children (Parvin Gonabadi, 1990).

2.2.3. Farabi

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Tarkhan, known as Farabi, is one of the famous Muslim philosophers who, under the influence of the philosophical thought of

Plato and Aristotle and its reinforcement in the context of Islam, has developed his own educational philosophy system, which, according to Davari Ardakani (1998), was called the inventor of Islamic philosophy for this reason. The cornerstone of all teacher characteristics from Farabi's perspective is based on the idea of a community living in a utopian City having an educational and religious basis. According to Farabi, teachers should be intelligent and clever, eloquent, love education and training, love truthfulness and hate lying, have generosity, be just and love justice, be brave, have a strong will and be educated according to the rules of his nature (Mirza Mohammadi, 2013).

3. Discussion and Conclusion

According to what has been discussed about the characteristics of a teacher from the perspectives of Western and Islamic thinkers and educators, it can be claimed that the behavior and personal traits of a teacher are very important. The future of a country cannot be imagined without educational considerations. The common characteristic of a teacher from the perspectives of Islamic and Western thinkers is that a teacher should be kind and compassionate to students, because it is this kindness and compassion that attracts students to the teacher and ultimately makes them interested in learning. Other characteristics include respecting the personality of the student and value them, control one's ego, desires and whims, not being stingy in transferring knowledge to the students,

and observing and establishing justice and equality among the students. The difference between these two views is that religious thinkers believe that teachers, in addition to all these aforementioned characteristics, must have the intention of teaching, belief, and closeness to God; Western thinkers do not accept religious moral education, especially in the curriculum, and from their point of view, what has ultimate value for humans is this worldly life and achieving happiness.

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