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LEARNING-TEACHING METHODS OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (P.B.U.H.)*

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Abstract

Education understanding and activities of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) have an importance worth in terms of education, religious education in specific. In this study, carried out by documentation and critical content analysis methods, were assessed the Prophet Muhammad's learning-teaching methods that were the first original model of Islamic education and practices. The Prophet Muhammad's learning-teaching methods that were extracted from practices that can be evaluated within the framework of education-teaching can be allocated into two categories.

The first category of methods that form the foundation of his understanding of education and are widely accepted in today's education mentality include telling, learning-teaching by observation, demonstration, learning-teaching by comparison, question-answer, learning by doing-experiencing. Methods in the second category, which reflect personality, way of communication, education understanding of the Prophet Muhammad. These methods are teaching by developing empathy, one to one/face to face learning-teaching, and learning-teaching by writing methods.

Keywords: The Prophet Muhammad's Understanding of Education, Learning-teaching Methods, Religion Education.

I. Introduction

Education understanding and activities of the Prophet Muhammad have an importance that is worth examining in terms of education, religious education in specific because in a society where education-teaching activities took place very few, where most of the people were illiterate, where culture was conveyed to young generations with imitation, a lot of concepts -reading, writing, pencil, clerk, teacher, school, teaching, senses, motives, heart, belief, etc. - which had not taken attentions and had not been noticed until that day formed the focus of new culture with all the liveliness and functionality with the Prophet Muhammad. At the same time, education-teaching activities started to institutionalize in terms of process, rules and methods. Besides all these, the Prophet Muhammad's continuous learning-teaching dynamism, education-teaching understanding and practices which had formed the main core of Islamic education and teaching activities, continuously maintained the feature of being model for the next education activities (Parladır, 1984: 32, 181).

This study, carried out by documentation and critical content analysis methods, is going to reveal the Prophet Muhammad's learning-teaching methods from his schooling activities that were the first original model of Islamic education and practices.

II. The Prophet Muhammad's (p.b.u.h.) Learning-Teaching Methods, Accepted in Today's Education Mentality

The Prophet Muhammad's learning-teaching methods that were extracted from practices that can be evaluated within the framework of education-teaching are: Telling, learning-teaching by observation, demonstration, learning-teaching by comparison, question-answer, learning by doing-experiencing methods. In addition to learning-teaching methods which are used in today's educational understanding, there are methods which reflect personality, way of communication, education understanding of the Prophet Muhammad, peculiar to himself. These are teaching by developing empathy, one to one/face to face learning-teaching, and learning-teaching by writing methods.

A. Telling Method

"It was midday in Medina. As always, companions gathered in the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid an-Nabawi) and they were waiting for prayer. Just then some people who were barefooted came. They did not have straight clothes. They were wearing coarse woollen clothes. It was understood from all the behaviours of them that those men who belonged to the tribe of Mudar were so needy. When the Prophet Muhammad saw that situation, his face suddenly changed. After prayer he made a speech. He read the 18th verse of Hashr from Quran: "O the believers! Beware of Allah

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and everyone should look at what they have prepared for tomorrow." He called his companions to help those people by saying them to help needy people by giving alms from what they had, even if it was half a date. Everyone brought something from what they had and there occurred two big heaps of eatables and clothes in masjid. The Prophet Muhammad whose face was shining in the face of this view told the importance of cooperation and guiding a good work by saying: "Whoever sets a good precedent takes sawab of both what he/she has done and the followers of him/her. Whoever sets an evil precedent takes sin of both himself/herself and the followers of him/her." (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3, 2014: 47-48). In this example, the Prophet Muhammad raised consciousness on companions about the topic and encouraged companions to help them by using the method of telling in order to satisfy the needs of people who needed help and solve problem of poverty.

The Prophet Muhammad used the method of telling not only for solving a problem but also while he was informing about a subject or protecting from a subject. For example, it is seen that he used the same method in the subjects like informing what right, good, beautiful are, guiding to them, protecting from badness and performing prayers. Hadiths like *how to pray* (E. M. II. 24, 581), *the importance of greeting* (E. M. II. 363), *how to greet each other* (E. M. II. 365, 377), *the necessity of doing favour to mother-father* (E. M. I. 1-9), *the right of mother-father* (E. M. I. 14), etc. are other examples that this method was used. However, while the Prophet Muhammad was using the method of telling, he did some implementations which were like comparing, likening, telling stories about the subject and teaching with examples which are used in learning-teaching in today in order not to distract listeners' attentions and for minimizing the rate of being bored.

a) Story-Telling Technique

The Prophet Muhammad told companions that story: "A man who became very thirsty during the journey went down into well and drank water. When he climbed out, he saw a dog eating the dust out of thirst. He felt pity for it and went back down into the well and filled his shoe with water and gave the dog water. Allah whose mercy is infinite forgave his sins because of that act." Companions asked with curiosity: "Will we have sawab for watering the animals?" The Prophet said: "Of course, there is sawab for watering any living creature." (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3, 2014: 92). The Prophet Muhammad tried to raise awareness for every living being and encouraged fulfilling animals' needs and doing kindness to them by telling that story. He also used the method of telling stories for raising awareness about fulfilling humane responsibilities like helping needy people and visiting patients.

b) Giving Examples Technique

The Prophet Muhammad: "If there was a river by the door of one of you and you bathed in it five times each day, do you think that there would remain any dirt on him?" People in there said: "No dirt would stay on him." The Prophet Muhammad said: "The five prayers are like that. Allah wipes out the sins with them." In this example, the Prophet Muhammad tried to tell that people who perform five prayers will be purified from spiritual dirt with the example of person who has no dirt on him owing to bathing five times each day in the river. Also, He started with asking question so that listeners would not be passive, distracted and would be more motivated for the subject.

c) Comparison Technique

The Prophet Muhammad would sometimes tell by making comparisons in order to both actualize more active and permanent learning and set more enjoyable learning-teaching environment. For example, by saying "The hand which gives is better than the hand which wants and takes" (E. M. I. 209-210), he compared the hand which gives sadaqah and the hand which takes it and emphasised the importance of giving sadaqah. In his hadith "goodness is good ethics, sin is thing that disturbs your soul and that you will not like if people realize" (E. M. I. 310), he tried to be helpful about making these more understandable and be learnt by comparing these two terms.

"One day, the Prophet Muhammad entered the masjid and there were two groups, one group was praying and other group was learning knowledge. He said, "They both are doing well, one is praying, others are learning knowledge, dismissing ignorance. I was sent as a teacher by Allah" and sat near the group who were busy with knowledge" (Hadislerle İslam, C. 1, 2014: 380). Also in this example, the Prophet Muhammad compared praying and learning knowledge and tried to tell the value and importance of being busy with knowledge by preferring learning.

d) Explaining by Likening Technique

"In loving each other, showing mercy and compassion to each other, Believers are like a body which other organs of it share the pain with sleeplessness and high fever when an organ of it becomes sick" (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3, 2014: 107) and "Muslim is like date palm which has always leaf, which gives fruit" (E. M. I. 372). In the first hadith, believers are likened to the organs of a body which are affected by each other since they are connected to each other; in the second hadith, Muslim is likened to a date palm whose shadow and fruit are used. The message in the first hadith is obvious: Believers cannot be insusceptible to each other. One's trouble is the trouble of all society and that trouble should be overcome in solidarity with cooperation. What

the second hadith wants to tell is that Muslim should be useful to all the creatures just like how date palm is useful to all the creatures with its shadow and fruit. If people cannot give any help, they should not do harm, at least because *"He is a person whom people are sure of his hand and tongue."*

B. Learning-Teaching by Observation Method

Quran notifies that the Prophet Muhammad is a great model for people (Al-Ahzab, 33/21) and wants people to take this model as an example (Al-Hashr, 59/7). The Prophet Muhammad was a model and guide to the people around him with his feeling, thought, speaking, behaviours and life both before he became a prophet and after it. Companions observed this model during all of their lives and tried to learn and actualize the Religion of Islam and worldview, philosophy of life that this religion had brought. Their deep love for the Prophet Muhammad made learning and actualizing principles of the Religion of Islam easier. So, those people of Jahiliyyah Period who had buried their daughters alive; despised weak people; nourished blood revenge; usurped the rights of other people; been usurer; derived improper benefits; etc. formed "the golden generation" in the model and guide of the Prophet Muhammad.

C. Demonstration Method

The Prophet Muhammad performed prayer while he was carrying his granddaughter Umama, from his daughter Zainab. When he stood up, he took her up and when he prostrated, he put her down (Hadislerle Islam, Vol. 6, 2014: 389). *When his daughter Fatimah would come to visit him, the Prophet Muhammad would stand up, take her by the hand, kiss her forehead and make her sit where he was sitting* (E. M. II. 317). *"He cared about women, listened them and paid attention to their education"* (E. M. I. 164). His performing prayer while he had his granddaughter on his shoulder his lap in a society where daughters were not wanted, were despised, were regarded as dishonour and were buried alive and with his attitude to his daughter and other women in a society where women were only seen as tool for meeting needs, were not given care, the Prophet Muhammad wanted to teach people these: Daughter and woman are not created different from men, they are created equal, they are precious and they should be given what they deserve. Otherwise, it is usurpation of rights, cruelty. Also, he showed that performing prayer while having granddaughter on shoulder and lap does not break prayer. People around him were observing, watching, taking him as a model for themselves and implementing what he did.

The Prophet Muhammad asked a companion who wanted to learn times of prayer to be with them for two days (Canan, Vol. 7, No date; 385) *so, companion learnt when and how to perform prayer by observing himself* (Zebidi, I. Vol. 1984: 133; Hadislerle Islam, Vol. 3, 2014: 497). As it is seen in the examples, the Prophet Muhammad himself would teach how to pray by showing. He would show and teach not only about prayers, good ethics and mentality, attitude change but also about some daily works that he knew. *One day, he helped a boy who was skinning a sheep what he slaughtered and he showed him how skin it by doing* (Yılmaz, 2010: 351)

D. Question-Answer Method

One Day, Abdullah bin Amr came to the messenger of Allah and asked "Is it vanity if I wear a nice cloth?" The Prophet answered, "No." When Abdullah said "Okay" and asked "Is it vanity if I cook and invite people?" the messenger of Allah answered, "No." "So, what is vanity?" asked Abdullah. The messenger of Allah said: "Vanity is underestimating the right and looking down on people" (Hadislerle Islam, Vol. 3, 2014: 520). *When a companions asked to the Prophet "Whom should I do favour?" the Prophet answered "Do firstly your mother, then your father favour"* (E. M. I. 5-7). *"One day, people asked to the beloved Prophet "Oh, the messenger of Allah. Which of the believers is more virtuous?" Our Prophet ordered, "The one whom the Muslims are safe from the harms of his/her tongue and his/her hand"* (Hadislerle Islam, Vol. 3, 2014: 386).

Question-answer method stands out as one of the most used methods in hadiths. As it is seen in the examples above, companions would ask questions to the Prophet Muhammad about various subjects that they wanted to learn. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged companions to ask questions with sayings like *"Knowledge is treasure, its key is question."* *"Cure of ignorance is to ask."* *"Be together with scholars, spend time with them, ask people who know, be friend with people who know."* and *"Good question is half of the knowledge."* (Aktaran Özbek, 1991: 149-150).

Besides companions' asking questions to the Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad would sometimes ask questions to the companions in order to keep their curiosity about learning alive, motivate them, provide mental alertness or actualize better learning.

He asked, "Who among you considers the wealth of his heirs dearer to him than his own wealth?" They replied, "There is none among us but loves his own wealth more." Then, the Prophet said, "Everyone loves his own wealth more" and "your wealth is whatever you spend before; the wealth of your heir is whatever you leave after your death" (E. M. I. 169). In this hadith, firstly he took attentions by asking a question about subject and made companions focused on learning, and then he wanted people to understand that it is more valuable for people to give sadaqah (meeting needs of needy people) from their wealth with their own hands in their lifetime. In another hadith, the Prophet said, *"Whom do you consider as a chief wrestler?" When companions said,*

"He is the one whom other men cannot defeat him", the Prophet Muhammad said, "Chief wrestler is the one who controls himself when in a fit of anger" (E. M. I. 170-171). In this and suchlike hadiths, the Prophet Muhammad tried to provide understanding, learning of a subject and attitude change by asking questions to the companions.

When companions sometimes said that the messenger of Allah knew better when he asked a question, Prophet Muhammad answered his own questions. *One day the Prophet asked to the Muadh bin Jabal "Do you know the right of Allah on people?" Muadh bin Jabal answered, "The messenger of Allah knows better." The Prophet Muhammad said, "The right of Allah on people is people's being servant to Allah and not associating anything with Allah." Then, he continued asking "As long as they do this, what is the right of the servants upon Allah, do you know? When Muadh gave him the floor again, he said, "It is Allah's not punishing them" (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3. 2014: 101). He asked companions: "What do you say about fornication and stealing?" Companions said: "The messenger of Allah knows the best." So, the Prophet informed them that they are unpleasant things and people should avoid them (E. M. I. 40).*

As it is seen in the examples, the Prophet Muhammad tried to keep attentions alive, motivate, make companions think, make subject be actively and permanently learnt.

E. Learning by Doing and Experiencing Method

Learning by doing and experiencing was one of the methods which was actively used in works of building a new society with notification activities and the changes of feeling, thought and attitude that the Prophet Muhammad tried to achieve. In the period of both Mecca and Medina, he was teaching companions revelations that he took from Allah, helping for understanding, becoming model by doing himself and trying to be a guide for companions about carrying them into life. So, the Religion of Islam and its principles were being learnt by firstly himself then companions by doing and experiencing and becoming a philosophy of life and life style. After Hegira, Al-Masjid an-Nabawi which had been built in Medina and a dynamic centre of education-teaching was an educational institute where revelations were learnt by personally experiencing and carrying into the life (Zengin, 2014: 27).

III. The Prophet Muhammad's (p.b.u.h.) Learning-Teaching Methods Reflected His Personality

It was stated in the beginning of methods part that in addition to learning-teaching methods which are used in today's educational understanding, methods which are peculiar to the Prophet Muhammad himself can be taken out from activities that can be evaluated within the framework of education-teaching. These are teaching by developing empathy, one to one/face to face learning-teaching, and learning-teaching by writing methods.

A. Teaching by Developing Empathy Method

This example can be given about teaching by developing empathy method: *"When a young man came to the Prophet and remarked that he wanted to commit fornication and asked permission for it, companions tried to make him stop speaking. However, the Prophet did not let them, sat near the young man and asked him: "Do you have a mother, sister, aunt, and daughter?" respectively. When the young man said "yes" at every turn, the Prophet asked, "Would you approve if a person fornicated with your mother, daughter, sister, or aunt?" When the young man replied every time "No way, the messenger of Allah", the Prophet Muhammad sedately told why other people would not approve it" (Hadislerle Müslümanlık, Vol. 6, 2014: 395). As it is seen in this striking example, one of the peculiar methods of him that he used while he was trying to make the change of feeling, thought, and attitude in people around him is teaching-educating by developing empathy. By guiding his collocutor to develop empathy, he was helping him try to understand his collocutor and so, head for truth-goodness and move away from bad-harmful.*

B. One-to-One/Face-to-Face Learning-Teaching Method

Wabisa ibn Ma'bad Al-Asadi was not resident of Medina. Within the time that he would stay in Medina, he would learn his responsibilities, what sawabs were and what sins were from our the Prophet and then he would go back. He went to the Prophet for that purpose. However, there was a crowded group around the Prophet Muhammad but Wabisa was decisive; he wanted to reach the Prophet at the risk of angering people. The Prophet Muhammad who followed his excitement said, "Come closer, Wabisa, come closer!" Before Wabisa who came so close to the Prophet that his knee would almost touch the Prophet's knee asked his question, the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v.) said: "Have you come to ask about goodness and badness/sawab and sin?" "Yes" said Wabisa. the Prophet touched Wabisa's chest and said: "Consult yourself (your heart), O Wabisa. Goodness is what pacifies your heart and what satisfies you; badness is, even if the people approve it, what wavers in your soul, what causes hesitancy in your chest, which you don't want people to know" (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3, 2014: 45).

"Abdullah bin Amr from the companions tried to fast everyday with the desire of being closer to Allah and spent the nights performing prayer. The Prophet Muhammad told him: "Oh, Abdullah bin Amr! I heard that you always fast during the day and perform prayer at night. Do not do that because your body, your family have rights on you." (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3, 2014: 102).

“One day the Prophet asked to the Muadh bin Jabal “Do you know the right of Allah on people?” Muadh bin Jabal answered, “The messenger of Allah knows better.” The Prophet Muhammad said, “The right of Allah on people is people’s being servant to Allah and not associating anything with Allah.” Then, he continued asking “As long as they do this, what is the right of the servants upon Allah, do you know? When Muadh gave him the floor again, he said, “It is Allah’s not punishing them” (Hadislerle İslam, Vol. 3. 2014: 101).

These examples whose numbers can be increased show that while the Prophet Muhammad was doing education-teaching activities with companions as a community, he was also taking of them one-to-one.

C. Learning-Teaching by Writing Method

The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in 23 years in parts (the Quran was sent by Allah through the angel of revelation called Gabriel). Companions were learning incoming revelations from the Prophet Muhammad, memorizing them and carrying them into the life. Also, the Prophet Muhammad had incoming revelations written and recorded by people whom he himself had charged for writing Quran and who were called “revelation clerks.”

The Prophet Muhammad was reporting incoming revelation to revelation clerks and telling them where it was going to be written in the Quran; which sura (chapters of Quran) was going to be written as which verse. Beside all these, he was asking companions to write revelations and copy what they wrote. So, the Quran was protected both in minds and in paper by writing down. Hazrat Umar became a Muslim after he had read a written copy of the Quran.

As it is seen, dictating or teaching by writing is one of the learning-teaching methods which are peculiar to the Prophet Muhammad himself.

IV. Conclusion

One of the most important aims of Islam Religion is to discover and improve abilities of humans who are born with knowing nothing from the wombs of their mothers and self-realization. The first teacher-educator who was charged to achieve this aim was the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v). He tried to make depreciated and retrogressive society liveable again with education-teaching activities, even though he faced various difficulties. The Prophet Muhammad, one of his duties was teaching, he attached importance to teaching people revelations that he received from Allah, informing them, spreading knowledge, making learned things actual, making actualized things permanent and constant (Yavuz, 1998). His education and teaching activities were the first original model of Islamic education and practices.

The Prophet Muhammad’s learning-teaching methods, that were extracted from his education activities, with them he tried to form a new world view on people and built a new society, are: Telling, learning-teaching by observation, demonstration, learning-teaching by comparison, question-answer, learning by doing-experiencing methods. In addition to learning-teaching methods which are used in today’s educational understanding, there are methods which reflect personality, way of communication, education understanding of the Prophet Muhammad, peculiar to himself. These are teaching by developing empathy, one to one/face to face learning-teaching, and learning-teaching by writing methods.

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