

Environmental Education (EE) from an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Due to human-being's action, environment is being rapidly changing. Human being's action is greatly affecting the environment in several ways that are unsustainable, undesirable, and unpredictable. Such misuse is the main cause for environmental pollution (EP) which is a key reason that our home (i.e. earth) is dying day-by-day. Therefore, the effect of the transition from present day patterns of unsustainable development is an issue that should be argued by all individuals, parents, teachers, schools, universities, etc. Yet, it is indispensable that everyone must be aware of environment impacts, as an ultimate goal for environmental education (EE). This research aimed to develop a model for EE to use as a framework of EE in the Islamic countries, such as Yemen. To this end, the researcher analyzed the available related literature as well as the Qur'anic verses and the tradition of Mohammed peace be upon him (PBUH). An Islamic Model for EE, as a result of analyzing the related literature, Qur'anic verses, and the traditions of Prophet, Mohammad, PBUH, was presented in this research.

Key words: Environment, Environmental Education, Model, Islamic Perspective

الملخص: تتأثر البيئة وتتغير بشكل متسارع، وبطرق متعددة تغيرا غير مرغوب، وبشكل يصعب التنبؤ به، كما يؤثر على استدامتها؛ بفعل استخدام الإنسان السيئ للبيئة ومواردها، والذي يعد سببا رئيسا لتلوث البيئة، وتدميرها يوما بعد يوم. لذلك يجب مناقشة الأنماط المؤثرة سلبا على البيئة من قبل كل قطاعات المجتمع المختلفة، وعلى كل المستويات أفرادا وجماعات. وإذا فإن تنمية الوعي البيئي لدى المواطن يعد أمرا ضروريا، كما ينبغي أن يكون هدفا من أهداف التربية الرئيسية، لا سيما التربية البيئية. وعليه فقد كان الهدف من هذه الورقة البحثية متمثلا في تطوير نموذج للتعليم البيئي من منظور إسلامي، كإطار للتعليم البيئي يمكن استخدامه في البلدان الإسلامية كاليمن. ولتحقيق هدف البحث؛ قام الباحث بتحليل الأدبيات المتاحة ذات العلاقة بالتعليم البيئي، بالإضافة إلى تحليل الآيات القرآنية، والأحاديث النبوية ذات العلاقة بالموضوع نفسه. وقد توصل الباحث كنتيجة لعملية التحليل إلى نموذج للتعليم البيئي، والذي نوصي بالأخذ به عند بناء وتصميم برامج التعليم البيئي لأبنائنا الطلاب، خاصة طلاب التعليم العام.

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century does not only launch with the same problems faced at the end of the 20th-century, but also it launches with aggravated problems particularly those problems which are related to the environment. All societies, even though they differ in their race, background, culture, etc., share almost the same concern about the environment, since it presents a common playing field for human-being and the other creatures such as animals as well as plants.

Unfortunately, due to human-beings misuse of the environment, the environment is being rapidly changing. Human being's action is greatly affecting the environment in several ways that are unsustainable, undesirable, and unpredictable (Clayton, 2012; Heft, 2012; Milfont, 2012). Such misuse is the main cause for environmental pollution (EP) which is a key reason that our home (i.e. earth) is dying day-by-day (ISESCO, 2002; Krauss, 2002; Chakkaravarthy, 2003). EP is not necessarily a local issue; it can widely spread from one country to another. For instance, harmful nuclear radiation pollution can cover many countries; a polluted river may carry deadly chemicals across countries; and polluted wind can transfer the air pollutants from one country to another. Therefore, the effect of the transition from present day patterns of unsustainable development is an issue that should be argued by all sectors of the society.

2. Background

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2.1. Environment

The term of the environment is wide to involve everything surrounding living being, i.e. human being, biophysical environment, built environment, and social environment (Young, 2003; Joseph, 2005; Singh, 2006). Environment includes everything surrounded living-being, including human being, it consists of natural world (i.e. plants, animals, soils, etc.), and social world (i.e. technological, social, and cultural world (Young, 2003). Noticeably, human is important for the environment and vice versa. Thus, it is important for human beings to have a good environmental awareness (EA) that enables them to be homogenized with all things in the environment surrounding them. Such awareness is impossible without offering a good environmental education (EE) to all people.

2.2. Environmental Education

EE is not a new concept. It has a deep root in the people's culture that is promoted through successive generations. Yet, the comprehension of ecological concepts linked to the educational process that reawakes educationists and environmentalists concern of the social groups that lead to conducting human society to a more rational interaction with the environment. Such rational interaction with the environment enables the change of individual and collective conception of such interaction; construct the abilities and mechanisms that are necessary for the environmental protection as well as the sustainable development. Besides, EE can benefit as the followings:

1. Enlighten people to understand their surroundings;
2. Provide a room for better living;
3. Serve as an engine room in creating EA;
4. Develop the people aesthetic beauty of life as well as the environment;
5. Solve the various environmental challenges; and
6. Provide various directives for the stockholders of education (i.e. EE);
7. Plays a crucial role in developing life planning (Udeh, 2016; Abrol, 2017) of the Islamic world.

Regarding the definition of the EE, there is no agreement on the EE's definition. Thus, EE can be defined as a continuous process for learning and teaching that prepares people to be aware about the environment; and acquire knowledge, values, skills, and experiences that enable them to be in familiar surroundings. Several attempts have tried to determine the EE term. For instance, IUCN (1990:2) defined EE as:

An EE is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings. EE also entails practice in decision-making and self-formulation of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality.

Therefore, the importance of education based on the environment is due to the merits of learning and teaching by using the environment. The environment provides students with a direct experience that helps them to acquire a good awareness about things surrounding (Ingram & Nelson 2006). It is a key for long-term environmental strategies to solve the environmental problems (EPs) and assure the importance of the environment (Lipchin et al., 2009). That is why it is indispensable that everyone must be aware about the impacts of the environment, as an ultimate goal for EE.

3. Model for Environmental Education

3.1. Palmer and Neal' Model for EE

In the context of EE, Palmer and Neal (1994) developed a model for EE. In this model, people learn about, for, and in or through the environment, which has been represented diagrammatically in figure 1. This model has a triple framework that consists of three elements: 'education about the environment', 'education for the environment', and 'education in or through the environment'. Within this framework, the authors indirectly identified three vital personal elements: personal experience in the environment, personal concern for the environment, personal action in and on behalf the environment.

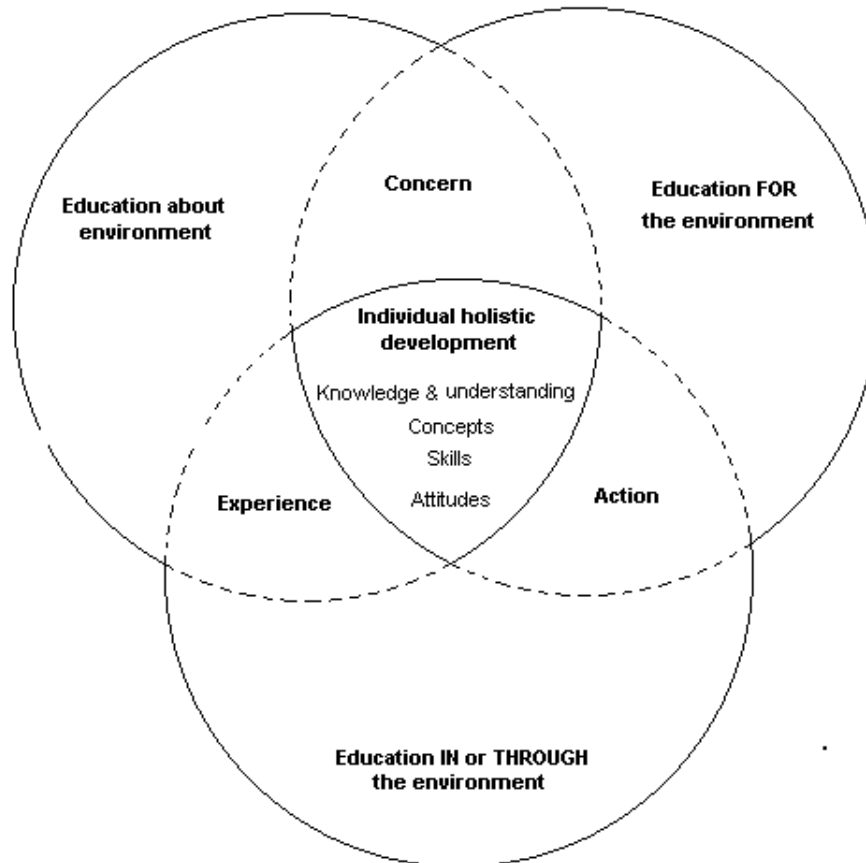


Figure 1. Palmer and Neal' Model for EE
Source: Palmer and Neal 1994

Although the model of Palmer and Neal (1994) presents remarkable ideas that serve to develop a theoretical framework for EE, it is unclear in regards to the distinction between "education in, or through the environment". As for 'education about the environment', it is concerned with "providing cognitive understanding including the development of skills necessary to obtain this understanding" (Lucas 1980-81: 33). Furthermore, learning about the environment can be achieved through developing students' understanding, skills, and values of the environment (Palmer & Neal 1994). In regard 'education through the environment', it means utilizing students' environmental experiences to increase their EA via the environment itself (Palmer & Neal, 1994). While 'education for the environment' focuses on helping students, more actively, the preservation and improvement of the environment, inculcating attitudes to, or concern for the environment's features that enhance the quality of life (Herremans & Reid 2002; Palmer & Neal 1994). Additionally, education in the environment is the use of real-life situation as a starting point for inquiry learning.

Moreover, the ultimate goal of Palmer & Neal's model for the EE is the sustainability of the environment, while the ultimate goal of the Islamic Holistic Model for EE is to achieve the homogeneity of human beings with the environment¹. Yet, Islamic Holistic Model for EE is a model for teaching and learning through, about, for, and in the environment (figure 2.). The Islamic perspective partially agrees with the viewpoint of Trivedi (2004: 2) hence he thought that "EE is the education through, about and for the environment". Therefore, Palmer and Neal' model can be modified to be more suitable for development EE in the Islamic World (IW). Besides, a little attention has been paid to the role of religion in improving people awareness toward the environment (Hitzhusen, 2007), in spite of its being a potentially rich resource, mainly the Islamic religion for developing people's EA.

1. The seven heavens, the earth, and all those in them glorify Him. There is not a single thing that does not glorify His praises—but you 'simply' cannot comprehend their glorification. He is indeed Most Forbearing, All-Forgiving (17: 44).

4. Result

An Islamic Model for EE, as a result of analyzing the related literature, Qur'anic verses, and the traditions of Prophet, Mohammad, PBUH, was carried out (see figure 2). From the Islamic perspective, there are many verses in the Holy Qur'an and many traditions of Prophet, Mohammad, PBUH that manifest the relationship between man and the environment, which can be included within the materials and activities of educational curricula to foster pupils' values, attitudes and knowledge towards the environment. For instance, Prophet, Mohammad PBUH, said, "When doomsday comes, if someone has a palm shoot in his hand, he should plant it" (al-Bayhaqi, 3:184). This *Hadith* suggests that even when all hope is lost for humankind, one should sustain nature's growth.

Many verses of the Qura'an that lead people, particularly Muslims, to understand, protect, and develop the environment. For instance, verses (5-115)² from Surah Al Nahal affirm that human being is a center of the environment, and all of its components have been subjugated to him, as a steward on the earth, but he is not the real owner of the earth, rather he is only a manager of it. Thus, man is responsible for Allah's rule and His commandments on this earth; to worship Allah Subhanahu Wata'la as the main purpose for his life (51: 56)³; and to utilize it for his benefit and for other creatures' benefits, too. Another example is the verses (95, and 96) of the 5th surah⁴ which indicate that Islamic teachings (i.e. Qura'anic teachings) do not neglect the importance of protecting environmental diversity (Al-hadabi, 2014) via the establishment of natural reserves (Kivistik, 2012; Bataresh, 2012).

Based on the above, an Islamic Holistic EE Model (Figure 2.) pays attention to the personal environmental experience that considers at the forefront of teaching and learning for, about, and through the environment that pays attention to an action to improve EE.

The necessity for "Islamic Education" as a framework of EE is referring to the following:

1. Many recommendations have been recommended that education in the IW must be Islamic-oriented, and all sciences should be taught from an Islamic perspective to enable Muslims to constantly remain at the forefront in all fields of sciences (Islamic Development Bank (IDB) & Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA), 2000; Al-Hadabi, 2016);
2. Taking into account the Islamic Holistic Model of EE for the Islamic countries helps educationists in providing students with the education that enables them to obtain an adequate awareness of their duty towards Allah the Almighty, their country (IDB & IFA, 2000), and towards things surrounding them, as a main goal for the EE; and

2. And cattle He has created for you (men): from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their (meat) ye eat. And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them as ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them forth to pasture in the morning. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and He has created (other) things of what ye have no knowledge. And unto Allah leads straight the Way but there are ways that turn aside: if Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you. It is He Who sends down rain from the sky; from it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn olives date-palms grapes and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day; the Sun and the Moon and the Stars are in subjection by His Command: verily in this are Signs for men who are wise. And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities): verily in this is a Sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (ingratitude). It is He Who has made the sea subject that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender and that ye may extract there from ornaments to wear; and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that ye may be grateful. And He has set up on the earth mountains standing firm lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads; that ye may guide yourselves (16: 5-15).

3. And I have not created the jinn and the mankind except that they should worship Me (51: 56).

4. O you who believe, do not kill wild game while you are in Ihram for the pilgrimage. And whoever of you kills it intentionally, so the penalty is an equivalent to what he killed, of domestic animals, as judged by two just men among you, an offering delivered to the Kabah. Or as expiation, the feeding of needy persons, or the equivalent of that in fasting, that he may taste the evil consequences of his deed. Allah has forgiven whatever happened in the past. And whoever commits it again, then Allah will take retribution from him. And Allah is All Mighty, Able of Retribution (5: 95-96).

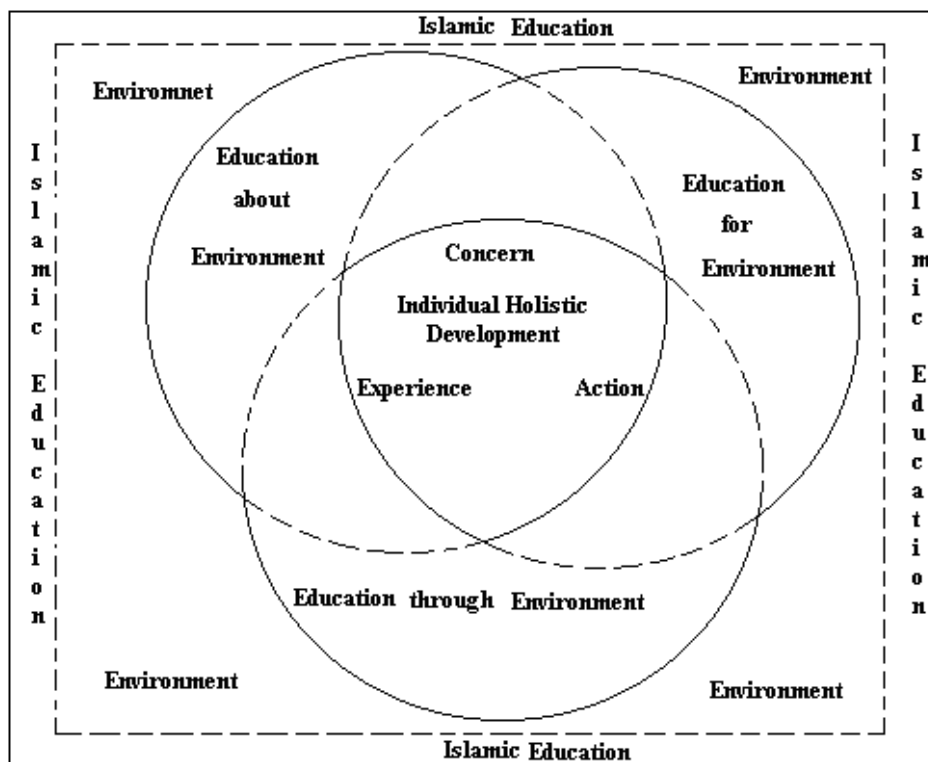


Figure 2. Islamic Holistic Model for EE

3. The Islamic Holistic Model for EE reflexes that the Islamic religion still can strongly participate in solving the scientific complex problems such as the EPs.

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