

# Teachers' self-evaluation of application of moral education principles (case study: Elementary school teachers in Isfahan, Iran.)

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## Abstract:

The present research has been done with the aim of analyzing elementary school teachers' self-evaluation of application of moral education principles in Isfahan. The statistical population of the research included all teachers, teaching at elementary schools in Isfahan in academic year of 2012-2013, being 3922 teachers in number. Among whom, a number of 340 individuals were selected using Cochran's sample volume formula and simple random sampling method. The research method was descriptive as well as survey type, and the data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire, containing several questions about elementary school teachers' self-evaluation of application of moral education principles in Isfahan, including 25 forced-choice questions based on Lickert's 5-rate spectrum, its components being as follow: the intertwined nature of moral education and religious training, illumination of appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire. Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was obtained 0.93, being considered as possessing sufficient reliability. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by related specialists. The data were analyzed using scientific modeling method of structural equations and SPSS 16 & Amos 18 statistical software. The results showed that the mean of all self-evaluation components was above average. Thus, there were no positive and significant relationships among all self-evaluation components. Also, self-evaluation had no significant relationship with none of demographic characteristics.

**Keywords:** elementary school teachers, self-evaluation, moral education, educational system, educational performance

## 1. Introduction

One of the important issues, with which the contemporary education is confronting, is the issue of moral education. Moral education has received special attention as an important aspect of contemporary education, since our era is that of destructive crises and challenges, and if individuals want to have mental balance, not to be overcome by conditions and be successful in their personal and social interactions, they should refer to moral education. The importance of moral education is incredible and obvious in educational systems. Essentially, moral education forms one of the fundamental bases of human culture. Thus, it has been focused on in Islamic culture since long ago, and it has been now placed in the center of attention in most countries (Davoudi, 2009; p. 154), since the present-day humans have to refer to moral values due to encountering the crises of human identities and lack of moral principles (Najarzadeghan, 2010, p. 22).

One of the issues of education during childhood is training religious concepts and moral education, being largely focused on in Islamic narratives and in the words of Islam authorities, representing the importance of childhood period in Islamic education. Imam Ali (PBUH) says: "The highest level of knowledge is recognition of moral issues and the ability of distinguishing them from each other, letting desired ethics reveal and removing undesired ethics." (Ghurur al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim, p. 378).

Several factors play a role in children's moral education, each holding this important burden in order to guide the children to their perfection point in life. Such factors include their families, friends and fellow children, society

as well as education system as a branch of the large society system. Based on its responsibility, the education system is responsible for the children's education in the society. In our society as a religious nation, transmission of and strengthening religious, moral and human values to the future generation is among the most obvious expectations from education system, and school is a factor which can play a crucial role in providing the students with religious training.

Of the vital factors, influencing formation of the children's moral personalities, is teachers taking the responsibility of guiding the students, and the students usually consider them as models, attempting to make them similar to their teachers. Thus, the teachers' good or bad behaviors and the extent of their familiarity with what is considered as good or desired in terms of religious beliefs and moral education, and also what they should do in the above respect are of high importance, since in the case of their not being familiar with such values or not performing what they know of them, the teachers can terribly destroy the children's moral education formation. Thus, it is concluded that moral education is a process for actualizing and providing the grounds of developing virtues and training moral concepts and rules at or out of school. Thus, who is the person, making children think about moral education issues, help them reach development in awareness and teach them purification and refinement? Who is that person holding such this big responsibility? is there anybody deserving such position more than teachers? It is too difficult to hold such responsibility for anybody except teachers, since only they are aware of the children's all aspects and dimensions and their nature and know which education type is suitable for them.

When the children enter education system and formally follow education, it is the teachers who have the responsibility of their guidance and moral education, proving the children with issues based on their understating and conditions. The issues presenting to them have some dimensions: scientific, social, religious, etc. and the teachers should have familiarity with each of these domains as much as they should educate the children.

The application of moral education is essential among teachers in that based on the holy words of Imam Ali (PBUH), "Evil does exist inside the human nature, and the virtues should be imposed to the humans". Moral interventions have long-lasting effects (Ghaemi, 1986). Thus, if the teachers, as the students' models and influencing education enterprise, are aware of moral education and apply it in relation to the students, it will exert a suitable effect on them.

### **Self-evaluation and its importance**

Self-evaluation means ego caring. The humans who want to improve their behaviors and try to enhance them should take care of their ego and their actions, meaning that if they decide to do a good deed, they should perform it as soon as possible and if they decide to do an evil deed, they should not think about it and forget it. Together with ego caring, ego calculation does exist. The holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: "Calculate yourselves before you will be calculated and measure your actions before they will be measured in the Resurrection Day." (Hor Ameli, 1989, the 11<sup>th</sup> volume, p. 3). Imam Ali (PBUH) says: "Fight against your ego and calculate it just as you calculate your financial partners and take from it God's rights just as you take from your enemy your rights, since the most prosperous individual is he/she who is perseverant in calculating his/her ego" (Nouri, 1988, the 12<sup>th</sup> volume, p. 154). Self-evaluation necessitates having courage and capacity. The individuals should be aware of the facts that what can be realized, they should recognize that the different groups have different norms and standards, they should possess needed awareness to talk to themselves, and they should be courageous enough to express the results of self-evaluation. With an emphasis on behavior improvement through self-evaluation and its suitability for the professors and faculty deans, Sanjari(1995) has stated: "self-evaluation provides the teachers and professors the opportunity to gradually modify their shortcomings step towards enhancing their level of knowledge and skills. In this method, the individuals rated the scales provided regarding their performances in different sessions, evaluating their performance levels with the level expressed."

Self-evaluation signifies the acceptance of the humans' respect and values. Through it, it is accepted that the humans, if being motivated, will make an attempt to improve their lives, not ignoring any attempt or sacrifice (Tousi, 1995, p.11).

With an emphasis on study and improvement of teacher training through self-evaluation, Seif(1998) has stated: "self-evaluation is the most appropriate method in studying and improvement of teacher training. In cases where the main goal is evaluation of teachers' educational activities, discovering their shortcomings in their teaching methodologies and their class management, use of teacher self-evaluation is inevitable."(p. 462).

Thus, with regard to the fact that Iran is an Islamic country; and accordingly, the education in this country should follow the Islamic principles and education, and that the responsibility of this important issue is on teachers, and as far as we know, no research has been conducted regarding this respect yet, the researchers in the present study were interested in examining to what extent the elementary school teachers in Isfahan are familiar with teachings of Islamic training in moral education, and while teaching in an environment dominated by Islamic government, to what extent they are familiar with Islamic principles and training.

## 2. The conceptual model of research

Based on the researches conducted, the conceptual model of research has been designed as follows: this model consists of such structures as the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire. Accordingly, the research assumptions were presented in order to design and identify the elementary school teachers' self-evaluation of application of moral education principles in Isfahan.

Figure 1. The conceptual model of research



## 3. Research questions:

1. Do the elementary school teachers in Isfahan apply the principles of moral education in dimensions of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire
2. Is there any significant difference among the elementary school teachers' self-evaluation in Isfahan regarding the application of moral education principles with respect to demographic characteristics (major, teaching experience, age and gender)

## 4. Research Methodology

The research methodology was descriptive-survey type. The statistical population of this research included all elementary school teachers, teaching in academic year of 2012-2013, being 3922 in number. To estimate the sample volume, a sample size of 350 teachers was estimated using Cochran's formula, and the sampling method in this research was simple random sampling type. The measurement tool in this research was a researcher-made questionnaire for examining the teachers' self-evaluation, containing a number of 5 components of the

intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire, derived from the studies done by Davoudi, M. (p.216) in the form of 25 forced-choice questions based on Lickert's 5-rate spectrum. The validity index for the questionnaires was obtained 0.93 using Chronbach Alpha method, and their validity was confirmed by professors of educational sciences major. The data obtained from implementing scales were analyzed using SPSS 16 & Amos 18 software and descriptive and inferential statistical styles. In descriptive analysis, the data were analyzed using such statistical characteristics as frequency, frequency percentage and mean. In inferential analysis of the data, types of one-way variance analysis test, Lewin's test, correlation coefficient, single-sample t-test, etc were used, proportional to the data measurement level and assumptions of statistical tests.

### 5. Descriptive findings

In this research, the description of data related to the respondents' general features, i.e. gender, age, educational level and teaching experience have been provided in table 1 below.

As shown by the data in Table 1, 61.5% of respondents were women, and the majority of respondents were 41-50 years old. Also, from educational level and teaching experience perspective, the highest frequency was related to the bachelor degree and to a teaching experience of 21-30 years.

**Table 1: Statistical description of respondents' demographic characteristics**

age	Percentage	Teaching experience	Percentage	Education degree	Percentage	Gender	Percentage
18-25 years	9.2	Less than 5 years	20.8				
26-35 years	28.5	6-10 years	16.2				
36-40 years	18.5	11-15 years	6.2	Associate degree	27.7		
41-50 years	37.7	16-20 years	12.3	Bachelor degree	63.8	Male	38.5
51-60 years	6.2	21-30 years	44.6	Master degree	8.5	Female	61.5

#### Inferential findings

In order to find out fundamental variables of phenomena or a summary of data collection, the factor analysis method is adopted. In Confirmatory factor analysis method, the research attempts to design a model to assume that experimental data are described, expressed or justified on the basis of a number of somehow little parameters. Confirmatory methods (assumption test) identify whether the data are congruent with a definite factor structure (provided in the assumption) or not. In order to do this, the method of structural equations modeling has been used. This method can be considered as a quantitative method, helping the researchers in organizing their research in terms of theoretical studies, their preparation and analysis of experimental data in a multi-variety form (Ghasemi, 2011). Concerning this, the most influential software is Amos software used in this research. In order to examine and confirm the research measurement model, some indices have been provided in this software. Table 2 below represents such indices.

Table2. Indices of general BARAZESH of the research comprehensive model

Best fit index	Acceptability criterion	Statistics
P	$P \geq 0.05$	0.50
GFI	$GFI \geq 0.90$	0.99
AGFI	$AGFI \geq 0.90$	0.96
PMSEA	$RMSEA \leq 0.05$	0.00
CFI	$CFI \geq 90$	1.00
RFI	$IFI \geq 90$	0.96
NFI	$TLI \geq 90$	0.98

With regard to the presented values, it can be said that all indices were satisfying, showing the acceptance of the research model. In table 3, the values of factorial load related to each variable have been provided. The factorial load in each variable shows that how much correlation that variable has with the related factor, i.e., the more the extent of factorial load of a variable is regarding a given factor, the more correlation that variable will have with the factor, comparing other variables. The least amount of factorial load necessary for a given variable or question was 0.32, being equivalent to a simultaneous covering of a 10% variance of that factor with the other variables given (HabibPour & Safari, 2010).

Table 3. Values of factorial load of each variable

Research variables	Regression weights of variables
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training	0.55
refinement of the appearance and soul	0.65
developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation	0.39
gradual elevation	0.65
permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire	0.81

With regard to table 2, from among 5 secondary factors of moral education principles, permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire had more correlation with scores of moral education principles with a correlation coefficient of 0.81, possessing the highest weight in related calculations.

Single-sample t-test:

Concerning that the Sig. value related to the 5 factors was smaller than 0.05 and regarding the confidence interval of 0.95, it can be concluded that the mean of factors was at an acceptable level.

Table 4. Results of factors mean test

Test Value=3						factors
Confidence interval of 0.95		Mean difference	Sin.(2-tailed)	Freedom degree	mean	
High level	Low level					
1.61	1.38	1.49	0.000	129	4.49	the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training
1.40	1.20	1.30	0.000	129	4.30	refinement of the appearance and soul
0.51	0.31	0.41	0.000	129	3.41	developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation
0.96	0.75	0.86	0.000	129	3.86	gradual elevation
1.30	1.08	1.19	0.000	129	4.19	permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire

The value of single-sample t-test in the above table showed that there was statistically a significant difference between the two real and assumed means, with a confidence level of 0.95 and an error level smaller than 0.05. Moreover, based on the results of this table, the value of real mean of variables was higher than the value of assumed mean (=3). Thus, on the basis of this table, it can be concluded that teachers used components of moral education principles in their education.

#### Test of comparing means of two populations

In order to do test of mean equality of two populations, it is essential first to examine whether the variance of two populations are equal or not. In other words, test of homoscedasticity is prior to test of mean equality. To do the test of Inequality of variances, Lewin's test was used. If the sig. value related to Lewin's test is 0.05, the assumption of homoscedasticity be rejected, otherwise, such assumption will be confirmed. If the variance values are equal, the first line of the table should be used in order to examine the mean difference between the two populations (men & women), otherwise, the line of variance inequality should be used.

Table 5. Results of factors mean test, based on gender

Factors		T-test for equality of means								Lewin's test	
		Confidence interval of 0.95 for mean difference		mean		Mean difference	Sig.(2-Tailed)	Freedom degree	T	Sig.	F
		High level	Low level	male	female						
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training	Equality of variance	-0.002	-0.47	4.35	4.58	-0.24	0.04	128	-2.00	0.01	6.76
	Inequality of variances	0.02	-0.49			-0.24	0.06	81.60	-1.86		
refinement of the appearance and soul	Equality of variance	0.03	-.37	4.19	4.36	-0.17	0.08	128	-1.72	2.48	0.12
	Inequality of variances	0.04	-0.38			-0.17	0.10	87.65	-1.64		
developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation	Equality of variance	0.36	-0.04	3.51	3.35	0.16	0.12	128	1.55	0.23	0.63
	Inequality of variances	0.36	-0.04			0.16	0.12	102.32	1.55		
Gradual revelation	Equality of variance	0.17	-0.27	3.83	3.88	-0.05	0.66	128	-0.44	0.72	0.13
	Inequality of variances	0.17	-0.27			-0.05	0.66	103.53	-0.44		
permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire	Equality of variance	0.15	-0.30	4.14	4.21	-0.07	0.51	128	-0.66	0.07	3.28
	Inequality of variances	0.16	-0.31			-0.07	0.53	85.31	-0.62		

Based on the results, the significance extent of the variables of refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was higher than 0.05, and it can be concluded that the difference in refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was not significant in the two populations(male & female). It can be stated that there was no significant difference among means of these two components in the two populations, meaning that gender did not influence the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire.

Test of Comparing Means of the populations (ANOVA)

Comparing the factor means with regard to age

Table 6 showed the results of test of comparing factor means among 5 age populations (18-25, 26-35, 36-40, 41-50 & 51-60)

Table6. Results of factors mean test, based on age

Factors		Sig.	F	Second power mean	Freedom degree	Sum of the second power
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training	Between groups	0.13	1.83	0.79	4	3.17
	In-groups			0.43	125	53.97
	Total				129	57.13
refinement of the appearance and soul	Between groups	0.06	2.29	0.69	4	2.78
	In-groups			0.30	125	37.96
	Total				129	40.74
developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation	Between groups	0.98	0.12	0.09	4	0.15
	In-groups			0.34	125	42.10
	Total				129	42.25
Gradual revelation	Between groups	0.03	2.87	1.03	4	4.11
	In-groups			0.36	125	44.81
	Total				129	48.92
permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire	Between groups	0.006	3.83	1.38	4	5.53
	In-groups			0.36	125	45.13
	Total				129	50.65

Regarding that the sig. value of components of gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between the means of the two populations regarding these components. In other words, the individuals' ages were effective on the components of gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire, i.e. the extent of application of the above-mentioned components was different among the teachers with different ages. However, since the sig. value of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation was higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference among the means of the population regarding this component, meaning that the individuals' ages did not influence these variables.

Comparing the factor means with regard to teaching experience



Table 7 shows the results of test of comparing factor means with regard to teaching experience.

Table 7. Results of factors mean test, based on teaching experience

Factors		Sig.	F	Second power mean	Freedom degree	Sum of the second power
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training	Between groups	0.09	2.07	0.89	4	3.55
	In-groups			0.43	125	53.58
	Total				129	57.13
refinement of the appearance and soul	Between groups	0.06	2.32	0.70	4	2.82
	In-groups			0.30	125	37.92
	Total				129	40.74
developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation	Between groups	0.59		0.23	4	0.93
	In-groups			0.33	125	41.33
	Total				129	42.25
Gradual revelation	Between groups	0.11		0.72	4	2.86
	In-groups			0.37	125	46.05
	Total				129	48.92
permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire	Between groups	0.009	3.51	1.28	4	5.12
	In-groups			0.36	125	45.54
	Total				129	50.65

Regarding that the sig. value of components of permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between the means of the two populations regarding these components. In other words, the teaching experience was effective on the components of permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire. However, since the sig. value of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation and gradual revelation was higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference among the means of the population regarding this component, meaning that the individuals' teaching experiences did not influence these variables.

Comparing the factor means with regard to education degree

Table 8 shows the results of factors mean test, based on education degree.

Table 8. Results of factors mean test, based on education degree

Factors		Sig.	F	Second power mean	Freedom degree	Sum of the second power
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training & refinement of the appearance and soul	Between groups	0.31	1.19	0.53	2	1.50
	In-groups			0.44	127	56.08
	Total				129	57.13
developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation	Between groups	0.52	0.66	0.21	2	0.42
	In-groups			0.32	127	40.32
	Total				129	40.74
Gradual revelation & permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire	Between groups	0.95	0.05	0.02	2	0.03
	In-groups			0.33	127	42.22
	Total				129	42.25
the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training	Between groups	0.91	0.09	0.04	2	0.07
	In-groups			0.38	127	48.84
	Total				129	48.92
refinement of the appearance and soul	Between groups	0.88	0.13	0.05	2	0.10
	In-groups			0.40	127	50.55
	Total				129	50.65

Regarding that the sig. value related to all factors was higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that, in this factor, there was no significant difference between the means of the populations. In other words, the individuals'

education levels did not influence the elements of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire.

## 6. Discussion

Moral education principles are instructions used as some guide in life. Nowadays, different societies make use of moral education principles for teachers and employees regarding the necessities in their formal education systems, and such principles play a crucial role in success of moral education process. The findings of the present research regarding the first research question showed that the extent of the elementary school teachers' self-evaluation of application of moral education principles in Isfahan in dimensions of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was above average, meaning that the elementary school teachers in Isfahan observe and follow moral education principles in teaching students. Thus, the obtained findings regarding the first research question was to some extent congruent with those of the research conducted by Hedayati(2006), Hoveida & Aghababaie (2010), Aghababaie & NasreEsfahani(2013), Bazarghan et al.(2001) and Kheiri & Alborzi(2004).

Moreover, with regard to the findings of the second research question, the results revealed that the application of moral education principles had no significant difference among the teachers with different education levels , meaning that the education level did not influence such elements as the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire. Thus, it can be said that all the teachers with associate degree, bachelor degree and master degree followed the moral education principles to the same extent. Moreover, regarding that the sig. value of the factors of permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire was lower than 0.05, it can be concluded that the individuals' teaching experiences were effective on the components of permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire, i. e. the teachers with different teaching experiences did not follow moral education principles to the same extent. However, since the sig. value of other components of moral education principles was higher than 0.05 among the teachers with different teaching experiences, it can be stated that the teachers with different teaching experiences followed the other components of moral education principles to the same extent.

Regarding the age of teachers, the findings showed that the sig. values of the intertwined nature of moral education and Islamic training, refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation were higher than 0.05, i.e. there was no difference among means of this component concerning different ages, meaning that the individuals' ages did not influence these variables of moral education principles, it can be said that the teachers with different ages followed moral education principles to the same extent. Eventually, in response to the forth research question whether there was a significant difference among Isfahan elementary school teachers' self evaluation of application of moral education principles regarding their gender features, the results showed that there was no significant difference among Isfahan elementary school teachers' self evaluation of application of moral education principles regarding their being men vs. women, meaning that gender did not influence the components of refinement of the appearance and soul, developing a feeling of moral intellection together with succumbing to reason and revelation, gradual elevation and permanent caring and opposition to egotistical desire. Thus, the teachers' being men or women could not influence their self-evaluations in application of moral education principles.

Hence, with regard to the positive effect of the elementary school teachers' self evaluation of application of moral education principles, the education authorities are recommended to make the teachers aware of why and how of the role of self evaluation of application of moral education principles in training students and in their lives. Moreover, the educational authorities are suggested to consider evaluation of application of moral education principles as a continuing process and make an attempt to do evaluation in the three areas below:

1. Teachers' self-evaluation
2. Students' self-evaluation &
3. Evaluation of educational programs

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