

Social Action in Education

Themes for Social and Economic Development

Issues for Social Action with Youth

Bahá'í Social – Social Action 12 Education

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Education

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 161–162)

Child Education

We prescribe unto all men that which will lead to the exaltation of the Word of God amongst His servants, and likewise, to the advancement of the world of being and the uplift of souls. To this end, the greatest means is education of the child. To this must each and all hold fast. We have verily laid this charge upon you in manifold Tablets as well as in My Most Holy Book. Well is it with him who deferreth thereto.

(Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian)

Lack of Education

Close investigation will show that the primary cause of oppression and injustice, of unrighteousness, irregularity and disorder, is the people's lack of religious faith and the fact that they are uneducated.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Secret of Divine Civilization](#), pp. 21–22)

Lack of Education

When, for example, the people are genuinely religious and are literate and well-schooled, and a difficulty presents itself, they can apply to the local authorities; if they do not meet with justice and secure their rights and if they see that the conduct of the local government is incompatible with the divine good pleasure and the king's justice, they can then take their case to higher courts and describe the deviation of the local administration from the spiritual law. Those courts can then send for the local records of the case and in this way justice will be done. At present, however, because of their inadequate schooling, most of the population lack even the vocabulary to explain what they want.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Secret of Divine Civilization](#), pp. 21–22)

Education

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

Education

Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honor, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Secret of Divine Civilization](#), pp. 129-130)

Education

It is... a vital necessity to establish schools throughout Persia, even in the smallest country towns and villages, and to encourage the people in every possible way to have their children learn to read and write. If necessary, education should even be made compulsory. Until the nerves and arteries of the nation stir into life, every measure that is attempted will prove vain; for the people are as the human body, and determination and the will to struggle are as the soul, and a soulless body does not move. This dynamic power is present to a superlative degree in the very nature of the Persian people, and the spread of education will release it.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Secret of Divine Civilization](#), pp. 129-130)

Education

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the promotion of education. Every child must be instructed in sciences as much as is necessary. If the parents are able to provide the expenses of this education, it is well, otherwise the community must provide the means for the teaching of that child.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, First Tablet to The Hague, Social Action §182)

Education of Children

The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, par. 103.1)

Children's School

It followeth that the children's school must be a place of utmost discipline and order, that instruction must be thorough, and provision must be made for the rectification and refinement of character; so that, in his earliest years, within the very essence of the child, the divine foundation will be laid and the structure of holiness raised up.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, par. 111.4)

Various Branches of Knowledge

Establish schools that are well organized, and promote the fundamentals of instruction in the various branches of knowledge through teachers who are pure and sanctified, distinguished for their high standards of conduct and general excellence, and strong in faith—scholars and educators with a thorough knowledge of sciences and arts....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §185)

Various Branches of Knowledge

Included must be promotion of the arts, the discovery of new wonders, the expansion of trade, and the development of industry. The methods of civilization and the beautification of the country must also be encouraged....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §185)

School at 'Ishqábád

One of the friends hath sent us a letter regarding the school at 'Ishqábád, to the effect that, praised be God, the friends there are now working hard to get the school in order, and have appointed teachers well qualified for their task, and that from this time forward the greatest care will be devoted to the supervision and management of the school....

One of the most important of undertakings is the education of children, for success and prosperity depend upon service to and worship of God, the Holy, the All-Glorified.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §186)

Education of Children

Among the greatest of all great services is the education of children, and promotion of the various sciences, crafts and arts. Praised be God, ye are now exerting strenuous efforts toward this end. The more ye persevere in this most important task, the more will ye witness the confirmations of God, to such a degree that ye yourselves will be astonished.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §186)

Establish Schools

This school is one of the vital and essential institutions which indeed support and bulwark the edifice of humankind. God willing, it will develop and be perfected along every line. Once this school hath, in every respect, been perfected, once it hath been made to flourish and to surpass all other schools, then, each following the other, more and more schools must be established.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §187)

Spiritual Education

Our meaning is that the friends must direct their attention toward the education and training of all the children of Persia, so that all of them, having, in the school of true learning, achieved the power of understanding and come to know the inner realities of the universe, will go on to uncover the signs and mysteries of God, and will find themselves illumined by the lights of the knowledge of the Lord, and by His love. This truly is the very best way to educate all peoples.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §187)

Material and Spiritual

Exert every effort to acquire the various branches of knowledge and true understanding. Strain every nerve to achieve both material and spiritual accomplishments.

Certainly, certainly, neglect not the education of the children. Rear them to be possessed of spiritual qualities, and be assured of the gifts and favours of the Lord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §188)

Every Kind of Learning

Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art—the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn world-wide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §188)

Both Girls and Boys

Your letter was eloquent, its contents original and sensitively expressed, and it betokened your great and praiseworthy efforts to educate the children, both girls and boys. This is among the most important of all human endeavours. Every possible means of education must be made available to Bahá'í children, tender plants of the divine garden, for in this consisteth the illumination of humankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §189)

Schools for Higher Education

Praised be God, the friends in 'Ishqábád have laid a solid foundation, an unassailable base. It was in the City of Love that the first Bahá'í House of Worship was erected; and today in this city the means for the education of children are also being developed, inasmuch as even during the war years this duty was not neglected, and indeed deficiencies were made up for. Now must ye widen the scope of your endeavours and draw up plans to establish schools for higher education, so that the City of Love will become the Bahá'í focal centre for science and the arts. Thanks to the bountiful assistance of the Blessed Beauty, means for this will be provided.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §189)

Schools for Girls

Devote ye particular attention to the school for girls, for the greatness of this wondrous Age will be manifested as a result of progress in the world of women. This is why ye observe that in every land the world of women is on the march, and this is due to the impact of the Most Great Manifestation, and the power of the teachings of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §189)

Instruction in Religion

Instruction in the schools must begin with instruction in religion. Following religious training, and the binding of the child's heart to the love of God, proceed with his education in the other branches of knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §189)

Order and Discipline

Make ye every effort to improve the Tarbíyat School and to develop order and discipline in this institution. Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Bahá'í or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God's gifts to man, and the pride of the human race.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §190)

The Inner Realities of All Things

Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are—this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §190)

Training in Character

It is certain that ye will make every effort to bring this about, will also draw up plans for the opening of a number of schools. These schools for academic studies must at the same time be training centres in behaviour and conduct, and they must favour character and conduct above the sciences and arts. Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §190)

Moral Training

Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger. A physician of evil character, and who betrayeth his trust, can bring on death, and become the source of numerous infirmities and diseases. Devote ye the utmost attention to this matter, for the basic, the foundation-principle of a school is first and foremost moral training, character and the rectification of conduct.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §190)

Subjects to be Taught

The subjects to be taught in children's schools are many, and for lack of time We can touch on only a few: First and most important is training in behaviour and good character; the rectification of qualities; arousing the desire to become accomplished and acquire perfections, and to cleave unto the religion of God and stand firm in His Laws: to accord total obedience to every just government, to show forth loyalty and trustworthiness to the ruler of the time, to be well wishers of mankind, to be kind to all.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §191)

Subjects to be Taught

And further, as well as in the ideals of character, instruction in such arts and sciences as are of benefit, and in foreign tongues. Also, the repeating of prayers for the well-being of ruler and ruled; and the avoidance of materialistic works that are current among those who see only natural causation, and tales of love, and books that arouse the passions. To sum up, let all the lessons be entirely devoted to the acquisition of human perfections.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §191)

Educating Children

Your letter hath come and hath occasioned the utmost joy, with its news that, praised be God, in Hamadán a welfare and relief association hath been established. I trust that this will become a source of general prosperity and assistance, and that means will be provided to set the hearts of the poor and weak at rest, and to educate the orphans and other children.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian, Social Action §192)

Educating Children

The question of training the children and looking after the orphans is extremely important, but most important of all is the education of girl children, for these girls will one day be mothers, and the mother is the first teacher of the child. In whatever way she reareth the child, so will the child become, and the results of that first training will remain with the individual throughout his entire life, and it would be most difficult to alter them. And how can a mother, herself ignorant and untrained, educate her child? It is therefore clear that the education of girls is of far greater consequence than that of boys. This fact is extremely important, and the matter must be seen to with the greatest energy and dedication.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian, Social Action §192)

Educating Children

God sayeth in the Qur'án that they shall not be equals, those who have knowledge and those who have it not. Ignorance is thus utterly to be blamed, whether in male or female; indeed, in the female its harm is greater. I hope, therefore, that the friends will make strenuous efforts to educate their children, sons and daughters alike. This is verily the truth, and outside the truth there is manifestly naught save perdition.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Arabic and Persian, Social Action §192)

Fundamentals of Knowledge

In this new and wondrous Cause, the advancement of all branches of knowledge is a fixed and vital principle, and the friends, one and all, are obligated to make every effort toward this end, so that the Cause of the Manifest Light may be spread abroad, and that every child, according to his need, will receive his share of the sciences and arts—until not even a single peasant's child will be found who is completely devoid of schooling.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §193)

Fundamentals of Knowledge

It is essential that the fundamentals of knowledge be taught; essential that all should be able to read and write. Wherefore is this new institution most worthy of praise, and its programme to be encouraged. The hope is that other villages will take you for a model, and that in every village where there is a certain number of believers, a school will be founded where the children can study reading, writing, and basic knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Social Action §193)

Universal Education

Bahá'u'lláh has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), p. 417)

Establishing Schools

Among the sacred obligations devolving upon the Spiritual Assemblies is the promotion of learning, the establishing of schools and creation of the necessary academic equipment and facilities for every boy and girl.

Every child, without exception, must from his earliest years make a thorough study of the art of reading and writing, and according to his own tastes and inclinations and the degree of his capacity and powers, devote extreme diligence to the acquisition of learning beneficial arts and skills, various languages, speech, and contemporary technology.

(Shoghi Effendi, 8 June 1925 to Spiritual Assemblies of the East—Persian, Social Action §195)

Establishing Schools

To assist the children of the poor in the attainment of these accomplishments, and particularly in learning the basic subjects, is incumbent upon the members of the Spiritual Assemblies, and is accounted as one of the obligations laid upon the conscience of the trustees of God in every land.

“He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My Loving-Kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world.”

(Shoghi Effendi, 8 June 1925 to Spiritual Assemblies of the East—Persian, Social Action §195)

Differences in Capacity

You had asked about poverty and wealth, and the toil of the poor and the comfort of the rich, and you had expressed your amazement and wonder at this situation....

The intent is not, however, to say that all the poor will become rich and they will become equal. Such a concept is like saying that all the ignorant and the illiterate will become the sages of the age and the learned of the learned. Rather, when education becomes compulsory and universal, ignorance and illiteracy will decrease and there will remain no one deprived of education.

(22 May 1928 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—Persian, *Social Action* §196)

Differences in Capacity

But, as the basis for distinction is in the person's capacity and ability, and differences are related to the degree of his intelligence and mental powers, therefore, all the people will not be equal in their knowledge, learning and understanding. The intent is to say that the world of creation calls for distinctions in people's stations, and degrees in the differences existing among them, so that the affairs of the world may become organized and ordered. Diversity in all created things, whether in kind, in physical appearance, or in station, is the means for their protection, their permanence, unity and harmony. Each part complements the other.

(22 May 1928 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—Persian, *Social Action* §196)

Comprehensive Education

... Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects.

(9 July 1931 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Social Action §197)

Principles for Education

You have asked him for detailed information concerning the Bahá'í educational programme. There is as yet no such thing as a Bahá'í curriculum, and there are no Bahá'í publications exclusively devoted to this subject, since the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá do not present a definite and detailed educational system, but simply offer certain basic principles and set forth a number of teaching ideals that should guide future Bahá'í educationalists in their efforts to formulate an adequate teaching curriculum which would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Bahá'í Teachings, and would thus meet the requirements and needs of the modern age.

(7 June 1939 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Social Action § 198)

Principles for Education

These basic principles are available in the sacred writings of the Cause, and should be carefully studied, and gradually incorporated in various college and university programmes. But the task of formulating a system of education which would be officially recognized by the Cause, and enforced as such throughout the Bahá'í world, is one which [the] present-day generation of believers cannot obviously undertake, and which has to be gradually accomplished by Bahá'í scholars and educationalists of the future.

(7 June 1939 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Social Action § 198)

Education

Education is a vast field, and educational theories abound. Surely many have considerable merit, but it should be remembered that none is free of assumptions about the nature of the human being and society. An educational process should, for example, create in a child awareness of his or her potentialities, but the glorification of self has to be scrupulously avoided. So often in the name of building confidence the ego is bolstered. Similarly, play has its place in the education of the young.

(Universal House of Justice, message dated 12 December 2011 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Education

Children and junior youth, however, have proven time and again their capacity to engage in discussions on abstract subjects, undertaken at a level appropriate to their age, and derive great joy from the serious pursuit of understanding. An educational process that dilutes content in a mesmerizing sea of entertainment does them no service.

(Universal House of Justice, message dated 12 December 2011 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Education in Tonga

Education, when understood simply as the amassing of information, falls short of helping young people reveal what is noblest within them: those moral and spiritual qualities that give knowledge its direction and its purpose. Over the past three decades, Ocean of Light International School in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, a Bahá'í-inspired educational institution, has been exploring how the cultivation of moral qualities and academic learning can be woven into a single educational endeavor.



Ocean of Light International Schools

Education in Tonga

“We have striven over these years to create a school where knowledge acquisition is guided by moral and spiritual principles and learning is directed toward service to humanity,” said Ta‘hirihi Fifita Hokafonu, director of the school. Understood this way, she suggested, students come to see their efforts throughout their education as a means by which to contribute to the life of their families and communities.



Ocean of Light International School

Education in Tonga

The holistic approach to education that Ocean of Light has taken, alongside rigorous academic instruction, emphasizes moral and spiritual education. Bahá'u'lláh refers to knowledge being as wings to the human spirit, allowing it to soar. Such education enables us to rise beyond limitations and see further than before.



Ocean of Light International School



Ocean of Light International School

Education in Tonga

The principle of the harmony of science and religion is central to the school's ethos. Far from standing in opposition, science and religion are understood as two complementary systems of knowledge that, together, help illuminate reality and guide individual and collective progress. Through the application of that principle, young students are encouraged to look beneath the surface of the ideas, technologies, and social forces they encounter, reflecting not only on how things function, but also on the values and purposes that should shape their use.



Ocean of Light International School

Education in Tonga

The competitive habits so often assumed in academic settings had given way to a culture of mutual support. Students learned to see a classmate's progress as inseparable from their own. That ethos gradually attracted more people to the school. The student body now numbers more than 580, from preschool through high school.



Ocean of Light International School

Education in Tonga

The spirit of shared endeavor and encouragement is not held by students alone. Students and teachers feel called to their higher self, as a noble being, with a sense of service toward humanity. Educator and student are walking the same path. Because they are taught about unity in diversity, they see that even though they are from different backgrounds, they are all one thing, part of one human family. The young people leaving the school will become a light everywhere they go.



Education in Tonga

The Ministry of Education alongside Ocean of Light have been ensuring that the students are prepared not only for examinations but for life. They are equipped with knowledge, values, and skills to serve their families, their communities, and the nation. The collaboration has helped strengthen Tonga's education system as a whole.

(Bahá'í World News Service, 2026, Moral and academic education fosters life of service

<https://news.bahai.org/story/1872/tonga-moral-and-academic-education-fosters-life-of-service>)



Ocean of Light International School faculty