

Modern Methodological Techniques in teaching Islāmic Studies at Higher Educational Level

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ABSTRACT

During the last century, there have been critiques targeted at methodology related to teaching and learning of Islāmic studies subject at higher education level, in particular towards the failure to effectively respond to the challenges brought by contemporary needs in this modern world. As one of the largest contemporary growing religion embraced by one fifth of the world's population, there is a real need for Islāmic studies to restore its methodology and approach in order to ensure its continuous relevance and as a response to the demands exercised by the globalization and presented by the modernity. Since scholars of the subject have seriously suggested a multitude of action plans to address the weakness and loopholes in teaching and learning of Islāmic Studies at Higher Level. This paper discusses various stands taken by Islāmic scholars in this issue and suggests ways and methodological techniques to improve the method of teaching and learning of Islāmic studies at Higher Education Level for the betterment of the society to provide fruitful results.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Islāmic Studies, Methodological Technique, Teaching*

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education represents a bridge which connects two periods of the life: before employment and after employment, therefore it has a significant role in shaping the social, political and economical expectations of every society. The future of a nation would be bright if the education system is well organized and maintained through the requirements of the time and equipped with technological developments in order to walk side by side with developed countries even more importantly to have enough strength to compete with them. Education means different things to different people. Historically, education deals with the knowledge, skills and experiences that one acquires from birth to death. Philosophically, it is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experiences, norms and values of a society in which one lives. A harmonized definition of education from various schools of thoughts is the acquisition of learning experiences, skills, norms and values of a society to enable one contribute significantly to the development of the society. In essence, any form of education which is destructive or which does not bring about progress and development to the society by any individual cannot be considered as education.^[1] The subject of Islāmic studies should be able to respond the challenges brought by the modernity at the level of theory and application. Therefore, teaching and learning Islāmic studies should be developed as the applicable subject to cope the contemporary needs of the modern world in light of the principles as stated in the Qurān and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Indeed, Islām should become part of global modernity and should be brought into line with the time. Proud with the glory of the past Islāmic civilization but stagnancy with innovating new ideas at the practical level do not help Islām to be seen as

the relevant subject in this modern world. Islāmic studies have to retain all principles of Islām and to inspire all human beings on the ways to live in this modern world in coexistence, peace and love.

Education from the Islāmic point of view is divided into two namely, the spiritual or religious aspect of education and the material or secular aspect of education.^[2] The spiritual aspects of education will regulate the relationship of man to his Creator, other creatures of Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) and to himself. This will teach man the consciousness of Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!), the purpose of his creation which is not accidental but to serve God, to obey His commands, be good to others and to prepare for the life after death. The secular aspect of education is the education a man acquires to fend for himself and cater for his sustenance in this world but in the process through lawful means and doing well to others. In support of this, Qurān says, “Do not forget your portion in the world, but do good to others as Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) has done good unto you”.^[3] In support of this Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed (2007), expresses opinion that the purpose of education in the Western World is to provide for the economic prosperity of a nation and that secular education at the personal level is to acquire academic and professional skills that will enable one to earn a respectable living in riches and fame and to also have a luxurious and comfortable life.^[4] Islām gives positive approval to the acquisition of any form of education be it spiritual or secular. Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) says:

“Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) will exhalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge to high ranks”.^[5] Also, a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) says, “Seeking for knowledge is obligatory on every muslim male or female”.^[6] These are enough evidences to show that a muslim could acquire any form of education be it religious or material; what is important is to observe the professional ethics because no profession teaches immorality, corruption or any bad thing.

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ISLĀMIC STUDIES

Islāmic Studies is very essential in the field of education because it teaches the Islāmic fundamental which is a source of guidance, security and motivation for the student. Ramadan (2004) points out that people have wrong impression of Islāmic education as mainly confining it to technical memorization of Qurānic verses, Prophetic traditions and rules of spirituality.^[7] A student who believes in Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) as his creator, Guide and Judge and believes in the guidance of Islām as to right and wrong has a sense of inner security which helps him to overcome many difficulties throughout his life from beginning to end. It assists in solving the social and personal problems of the muslims in an Islāmic context.^[8] The teaching of Islāmic Studies motivates the student to work hard and places greater importance on seeking knowledge. It teaches the belief in the unity and oneness of Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!), the Most Supreme Being.^[9] A person’s beliefs influence his moral conduct. It is his beliefs and moral standards that will determine which way he uses his knowledge and the subject that can guide and direct this usage is Islāmic Studies. One other objective of including Islāmic Studies education in the higher education syllabus is to awaken in the student the consciousness of Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) as the foundation of his intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth and to provide a sound Islāmic base for rational and reflective understanding of the world around him. To make the student conscious of his responsibility to Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!), serving Him with all the talents and resources, he has given him. To train the student’s personality towards the best moral and social conduct, healthy attitude and self discipline in accordance with the guidance of the Qurān and Sunnah. In the words of Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed, “The

aim of Islāmic education is character building. Growth and development of Islāmic personality should be the final goal of any Islāmic school. As Muslims, our educational aim is to develop the personalities of our children to the end that they will be conscious of their responsibility to God (the creator) and to fellow humans".^[10]

Also, the objectives of teaching Islāmic Studies in higher education is to encourage the pursuit of useful knowledge in accordance with the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that "The search for knowledge is incumbent on every muslim male or female" and the application of such knowledge for the benefit of humanity in the fields of Arts, sciences, medicine and technology. Bill Rammel (2007), describes the study of Islāmic Studies as a subject of strategic importance in the sense that its teaching should focus on training of graduates who would be equipped with right knowledge, attitudes and skills. It is to be taught in the national interest and to safeguard research. It is also to project the role of Muslims in the contemporary world.^[11]

III. CONTENT OF ISLĀMIC EDUCATION

Boyle Hellen (2004) expresses the terms Islāmic education and Islāmic schooling in broader way than Qurānic schooling. According to him, the former are seen to encompass any level of traditional muslim education while the latter is seen as an institution that focuses exclusively on facilitating memorization of the Qurān or some Qurānic verses.^[12] The primary contents of Islāmic education include the study of the Qurān, traditions, ahadith), the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), law and Jurisprudence, Arabic etc. Ramadan (2004), is of the opinion that in-depth knowledge of the environment, mastery of the language, familiarity with the history of the country, knowledge of the institutions, study of culture, social dynamics, and the political landscapes are all to be added to the content of Islāmic education to create a total personality.^[13]

IV. MODERN TECHNIQUES SUITABLE FOR TEACHING OF ISLĀMIC STUDIES AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

The existing education models can be divided into three as Taha Jabir al-Alawani classified it in his book *Outlines of a Cultural Strategy*. According to him, there are three educational approaches, namely:

a. The traditionalist approach: This approach considers the Ummah's traditionally thought to be self-sufficient and capable of being presented as it is or with very little alteration. This approach is described as the approach of authenticity;

b. The modernist approach: This approach considers a systematic civilization cannot be built in the contemporary world without the Western thought and its worldview. The view is often described as modernistic;

c. The eclectic approach: it is an approach accommodates traditional and modernist views on education. In which one must select from traditional thought what is most sound, and from 'modern' contemporary thought that which one considers and proves to be correct.^[14]

According to Sidek Baba (2004), the eclectic approach is unique and newly developed method of studying Islām.^[15] Taha Jabir Al-Alawani (1989) also suggested this method as a valid method to overcome the gap between traditionalist and modernist approaches of Islāmic education. In this method, Islāmic education is complemented with modern subjects. In the view of Sidek Baba, the educational objectives are achievable only through the integrating of both traditionalist and modernist approaches of education. He described that "it is

important to integrate the two to form an intellectual structure that will provide the basis for achieving the required objectives”

Among the modern techniques, methods, devices, or approaches suitable for teaching of Islāmic Studies at higher education level are:

1. Activity Method. This is the method whereby the teacher directs the students learning through activities. It involves students’ participation. Activity method is about the pragmatic method which John Dewey an American Philosopher in Psychology propounded. “It is learning by doing”. It is very useful in teaching topics like “A complete Rakat”, “Ablution”, “Marriage” “Zakat”, Qurānic Recitation and Hadiths, etc.

2. Project Method. It is a device designed to put the responsibility on the individual or group of students to carry out their learning activities with the teacher as an adviser. This is good for topics like “Blessings of Ramadan”, “Contributions of Hadhrat Abu Bakr (May Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) be pleased with him) to the Development of Islām” “The Conversion of Hadhrat Umar (May Allāh (Praise and Glory to Him!) be pleased with him) to Islām, “The Recipients of zakat”, and “concept of Tawhid” and a host of others.

3. Discussion Method. This involves approaches by which the teacher directs members of a class or group to share their knowledge, ideas and experiences freely with other members of the class. Pupils do this in a play way and less tensed atmosphere and thereby gain a lot in the process. Secondly, recollection will likely be easy because they participated fully in the discussion. This method is suitable for topics like “Polygamy in Islām”, “Causes of Divorce and forms of Divorce”, Conditions governing zakat, Saum etc.

4. Audio-Visual Instructions. It involves using audio-visual materials to aid instruction e.g. Radio, Television set, films, projectors, computer and internet facility. etc. It could be used to teach Hajj, A complete Rakat.^[16]

V. CONCLUSION

This paper traced the concept of education from the Islāmic point view. The study however pointed out the need to review the curriculum in use to make the subject relevant to the present society in order to make Islāmic Studies graduates marketable and to also contribute significantly to the development of their environment. Ideally, Islāmic education is holistic where knowledge is produced by revelation and human experience, the knowledge could transform through various human faculties such as mind, heart and soul, the domain of knowledge are interconnected and produce vicegerent who might rule the world with justice and peace. Based on this holistic view of education, Islāmic studies, its curriculum, transformation of knowledge and learning process should be determined. The existing models of teaching Islāmic studies are supplemented with modern science teaching methods. A scientific research is needed in order to measure the success of an eclectic approach in teaching Islāmic studies which gives options the students to select a Major in Islāmic studies and a minor in social sciences or other way. The lived practice method also is required a study to understand its practicality and the success. The modern educational parameters to measure the success of teaching which is known as taxonomy can be applied to evaluate the success of knowledge, cognitive and affective domains. The development of soft skills also can be determined through

taxonomy. However, spiritual and emotional developments are needed to be evaluated in their practical life and their commitment to Islām. The improvement in Islāmic studies at higher education level needs to be updated with problem base system of teaching method. In which, the students, as Imam Abu Hanifah (699-767 C.E.),

Imam Ghazzali (1058–1111 C.E.) and Ibnu Rushd (1126-1198 C.E.) practiced, are given an opportunity to face contemporary problem and find out the solution.

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