■ PROGRAM ON ISLAMIC STUDIES

TEACHING METHODS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION: THE TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

Islamic knowledge is transmitted through chains of narrations from the source to the learner. In the case of the Qur'an, it originates from Allah and was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through Angel Jibril (on him be peace). The Prophet then taught it to his Companions who passed it on to their students, continuing this chain until modern times.

The Qur'an has been transmitted by way of tawatur or mass transmission, meaning the information was conveyed by such a large number of people that it would have been impossible for them to conspire to fabricate it. There are also cases when the transmission of knowledge is employed through Hadith, the science concerned with the proper understanding of the Prophetic narrations. It deals with the chains of narrations and whether they are acceptable or not as bases for law and creed.

While tawatur transfers the Qur'an through mass transmission, Hadiths adopts its own distinct method

of authentication which requires a certain level of criticality and reflection.

As a religion with a vast and rich tradition of knowledge, knowledge-seeking, and documentation, Islam has developed methods to ensure the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation. These methods have been derived from the noble Qur'an and the Sunnah, and have been used by teachers to enhance learning.

This policy brief will present several teaching methods and evaluate their applicability as a teaching policy in the Philippines. As Al-Rawi (2013, 100) defines it, teaching methodology is "the mechanism that is used by the teacher to organize and implement a number of educational means and activities to achieve certain goals." These methods include scaffolding, connecting lesson to current events, tasmi (audition), ijtihad practice, modeling, storytelling, and mentoring. These teaching methods are particularly useful in the Philippines where Islamic education has been institutionalized both within Muslim communities and at the national level through

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Some teaching methods are more applicable to certain sciences than others. For instance, ijtihad practice and modeling are applied mainly only to the science of *fiqh*[2] since they pertain to actions of the limbs, while tasmi' is primarily in Qur'an memorization.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is defined as any assistive interventions teachers provide to their students (Gonular and Loewen 2018, 2). An example of scaffolding is when Allah introduces legislation to the Muslims in a step-by-step manner. This is evident in the gradual prohibition of intoxicants in the Qur'an. Allah first informed the Muslims that intoxicants do have some benefit, but their harms outweighs its benefit.[3] Later, Allah instructed the believers not to approach the prayer while they were intoxicated, as they would not understand their own speech.[4] Finally, Allah declared all intoxicants prohibited.[5] This absolute prohibition occurred a few days after the Battle of the Confederates (Al-Baghawi 1988, 250).

Islamic scholars have historically employed scaffolding in the books they authored. They began first by writing a *mukhtasar*, a short, summarized textbook that only included the foundational concepts. Then they wrote commentaries on these summaries, followed by marginal notes on the commentaries. Subsequently, they also produced longer, more detailed works called *mutawwalat*, accompanied by their own commentaries and marginal notes. This progressive approach facilitates comprehension and retention.

Connecting to Current Events

The Qur'an was not revealed all at one time in Makkah.[6] Instead, Allah revealed it gradually throughout a period of 23 years. Each revelation addressed the specific circumstance the Muslims were facing at the time. Today, we learn about these circumstances through literature on Asbab an-Nuzul (Causes of Revelation) and Fiqhus-Seerah (Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography). An example of this was when Allah revealed the verse:

> Verily He Who ordained the Qur'an for thee, will bring thee back to the Place of Return. Say: 'My Lord knows best who it is that brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error. (Qur'an 28:85)

This verse was revealed when the Prophet had just left his hometown of Makkah and had started to miss it (Mahalli and Suyuti 396). Ten years later, the Prophet did return along with his army and successfully conquered Makkah – the realization of the above verse.

This methodology was employed to enhance the retention of the current lesson. It also demonstrated to the learner that the subject matter held relevance to everyday life.

Tasmi'

Tasmi' is the act of reciting a piece of text to a qualified individual, from memory or by reading from the text. It is commonly employed in Qur'an memorization, where students recite to their teachers what they have memorized. Teachers also use it to assess a student's proficiency in reading Arabic script without diacritical marks and their ability to read the Qur'an correctly.

Textual evidence for this practice can be found in the Sunnah. The Prophet used to recite the Qur'an to Angel Jibril once every year during the month of Ramadhan.

Ijtihad Practice

Ijtihad refers means to exhausting one's capabilities in arriving at an answer to a legal issue. Ijtihad practice is

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2 This pertains to the Sacred Law regarding the physical and verbal actions that were established through scholarly deduction. It includes issues of whether or not dog saliva invalidates one's ritual purity. It does not include the prohibition of ingesting intoxicants.

3 See Qur'an 2:219

4 See Qur'an 4:43

5 See Qur'an 5:90

6 See Qur'an 25:32

when a teacher gathers his students to discuss a legal issue among themselves, applying the legal theory of the *madhhab* to which they belong. Afterward, they would present their conclusions to the teacher, who would then review, advise, or deliver a judgment on the matter. This was practice was exemplified by Imam Abu Hanifa who would gather his students to deliberate both past and contemporary legal issues. The students would then submit their conclusions to him for review (Al-Kawthari 2016, 27).

Modeling

Modeling is a method of teaching through demonstration (Haston 2007, 26). It was one of the ways the Prophet would taught the Muslims about Islam, especially how salah, or prayer, was taught. The Prophet said: "Pray as you saw me praying."[7]

This method of teaching is the key tool for imparting to students the correct way to purify oneself through ablution as well as the proper way to perform prayer. It also applies to teaching the pilgrimage. Modeling is part of the general command to emulate the Prophet in all aspects of life.[8]

Storytelling

Allah uses storytelling as a means to elaborate a point or provide a lesson for people to reflect upon. The Qur'an contains parables and stories of the Prophets and ancient communities that offer lessons for reflection. An example of this can be found in the twenty-eighth chapter of the Qur'an. The ayat introduces the Pharaoh and his crimes, including his decision to slay the newborn males of the Children of Israel, because he feared that the one who would cause his kingdom to crumble would come from them (Ibn Kathir 1999, 221).

> Truly, Pharaoh elated himself in the land and divided its people into sections, depressing oppressing a group among them.: their Their sons, they slew, but he kept alive their females alive;: for he was indeed an evil-doer. (Qur'an 28:4)

The succeeding verses proceed to narrate the actions of the mother of Moses (on him be peace) in response to the Pharaoh's policy of slaughtering the newborn males of her tribe. It includes how she placed her son in a basket anchored to the riverbank of the Nile whenever there was a threat, and how one day, the basket got unlatched and floated into the Pharaoh's palace. Finally, after recounting how the Pharaoh and his army were swallowed by the sea, Allah says: "Now behold what was the end of those who did wrong!" (Qur'an 28:40).

This story, along with others like similar to it, illustrates the ultimate consequences of evil deeds. Many other such examples can be found in the Qur'an.

Mentoring

According to Crawford (2010, 2–3), mentoring is a teaching method aimed at developing individual skills through a partnership between mentor and student. It seeks to guide the mentee towards a specific goal. Mentoring in Islam is a divine commandment. Allah says:

> "O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Qur'an 9:119)

The scholars of Islam assert that companionship with those who are truthful will eventually result in the person becoming truthful (Ibn Kathir 1999, 233). This practice was especially applied by the Sufi orders, where students would seek mentorship from a master of the spiritual path (Shar'i 2010, 3). Ali Gomaa (2008, 19), the former Grand Mufti of Egypt, writes, "The teacher attempts to allow his student to reach the level of good conduct with Allah and the first thing of good conduct that he teaches is az-zikr (remembrance of Allah). After that, he teaches him to not direct any attention to anything other than Allah, the goal of all."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section will discuss recommendations for development. I have limited the scope to time requirements, resources, and teacher competency requirements.

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7 Al-Bukhari. Book 10, Hadith 28. "Call to Prayers (Adhan)." https://sunnah.com/bukhari:631.

8 See Qur'an 3:31

Scaffolding requires considerable time to assess and organize the intended material within available time per subject. It does not require many resources but does require the expertise of curriculum specialists who are trained in the subject.

Connecting the lesson to current events does not require much time and resources. The teacher can apply this method directly. However, it demands a good grasp of current events.

Modeling is a protracted teaching methodology that requires ensuring that the student has correctly demonstrated the actions or rituals being taught. In terms of resources, the model itself is the primary requirement. Additionally, the teacher must have deep knowledge of the act that is to being modeled, as well as constancy and consistency in checking the student's performance.

Tasmi' and *Ijtihad* practice both require lengthy amounts of time. For *tasmi'*, this is because it is a one-on-one instructional tool, meaning, the teacher will need to listen to the entire class. As for *ijtihad* practice, research on the issue must be done first, and even then, there will be extensive teacher-student exchanges before reaching a conclusion. With regards to resources, *tasmi'* only requires a copy of the Noble Qur'an, while *ijtihad* practice requires numerous books that cover all facets of the given issue. When it comes to teacher competency, *tasmi'* requires a teacher who reads Qur'an well, while *ijtihad* practice demands mastery-level knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence.

Finally, mentoring does not require any additional time or resources beyond the duration of the class and supplementary engagement afterward as it is present at all times during the learning process. However, it does demand that the teacher be an expert in his field, have a firm commitment to continuous learning, and demonstrate exemplary character at all times.

Overall, most of these methodologies should be applicable from elementary to tertiary -levels and should lead to better retention of subject material. Scaffolding, connecting to current events, and modeling are suitable for all levels, while *tasmi'* and *ijtihad* are more appropriate for specialized institutions of learning.

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