

Compatibility between the Prophet's Questioning Strategies and Modern Teaching Methods

Gasmi Mustapha *

Ammar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria), mu.gasmi@lagh-univ.dz

Received: 22/09/2021 Accepted: 23/11/2021 Published: 25/01/2022

Abstract:

The methodology of teaching is considered one of the most important pillars in the educational process. The importance of educational methods is derived from the fact that the content of any curriculum cannot be learned efficiently unless it is presented in a specific way. As for the Prophet, Muhammad peace of Allah be upon Him, used various methods such as using body language, telling stories, drawing simple illustrations, asking questions for creating a suitable educational atmosphere. The main objective behind the present paper is to survey the main teaching methods followed by the Prophet, Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him, focusing on the question-answer method, and see to what extent it is compatible with the modern methods of teaching. As a research tool, a variety of The Prophet's hadiths were analyzed, focusing mainly on the Hadith about charity.

Keywords: Hadith , Teaching methods, Prophet Muhammad's teaching strategies, Question-answer strategy

INTRODUCTION

Prophets are considered as the best teachers. As for the Messenger, Muhammad, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, like all the apostles, his sayings and actions were supported and confirmed by revelation. His teachings provide advice on the basics of Islamic education for Muslims. Al-Ghazali (1997)¹ studied prophetic education and were able to focus on more specific content areas, such as the teachings of the Prophet and how they could be applied to specific areas of his life, especially in the educational field. In the learning process and to guide his companions, and according to Alkanderi (2001)² the Prophet used various methods such as using body language, telling stories, drawing simple illustrations, asking questions for creating a suitable educational atmosphere. The main objective behind the present paper is to survey the main teaching methods followed by the Prophet, Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him, focusing on the question-answer method, and see to what extent it is compatible with the modern methods of teaching.

1. Teaching Methodology

Planning is a secret key to effective teaching. This allows teachers to consider all of their actions, words, and actions. In the teaching and learning process, planning begins with the adoption of a set of philosophical approaches and attitudes behind learning. Palmberg, Rolf, (2004) argues that the methodology of teaching is considered one of the most important pillars in the educational process. The importance of educational methods is derived from the fact that the content of any curriculum cannot be learned efficiently unless it is presented in a specific way. Inadequate methods may handicap the process of teaching and learning or cause undue wastage of effort and time. According to 'Abd al-Rahim Ghunaymah (2001)³, the methodology of teaching consists of practical ways in which the aims and objectives of teaching are implemented. Muhammad Aoyyah M-Abrashi maintains that the methodology of teaching is a path by which we make students understand any subject or lesson taught to them. Methodology of teaching is the way in which teachers make learners understand and channel their behaviours in line with the

intended aims. Apart from giving the pupils information and knowledge, it can be considered a tool in order to help them to acquire good habits, attitudes, and desired values which are variables and thus have a direct link with the learning process.

Due to the importance of the method of teaching and its high position in the teaching and learning process, scholars like O'Malley, J. Michael and Anna U. Chamot (1999)⁴ have paid great attention to upgrading the position of the way to teach students. As a basic approach, questions can be used to assess and test student knowledge, to reach students 'thinking, or simply to help students learn to ask and answer questions in learning situations.

2. Teaching Methodology and Islamic Education

Teaching methods are the different instructional activities that are prepared and practiced by teachers and implemented in class. Khamis & Salleh (2010)⁵ argue that the Islamic philosophy of education is created based on three basic elements, which are the learner, the knowledge, and the means of instruction. Many studies highlighted the correlation between the use of effective teaching methods and the effective implementation of integrated curriculum.

Othman and Saedon argue that Islamic integrated education can only be achieved by implementing the effective strategy, approach, method and technique in the teaching and learning process. Ashraf believed that despite the availability of carefully developed curriculum and textbooks, the objectives of the integrated curriculum will not be achieved if teachers lack the knowledge about the teaching methods that correspond to that curriculum. Using a variety of teaching methods is essential because human beings receive and comprehend information differently and also because of the different nature of different subjects. The Islamic heritage is rich in varieties of teaching methods that is suitable for all learners. By drawing upon the effectiveness of the Quranic and Prophetic teaching methods in early times, it can be assumed that they can be similarly successful and beneficial in teaching non-religious subjects.

3. Question-answer Method

Questions are the core at every stage in education around which all communication between teacher and students takes place. They are essential means of teaching and lie at the very heart of developing critical thinking abilities in students. Scholars claim that skilful questioning performs a number of important functions. Socially, it helps to establish relationships and integrate different groups through face-to-face interaction. Psychologically, it assists in creating, developing and maintaining a healthy emotional and intellectual climate as well as establishing appropriate levels of motivation. Educationally, the questions can assist learners to obtain information. It may probe the extent of learners' prior learning before a new subject is introduced, help to revise earlier learning or consolidate recent teaching and learning. More than that, the question helps learners to focus and clarify, and thus have new thoughts and perceptions.

One of the main tasks of the teacher is to ask questions in the official content frameworks, orally or through tests and exams. Asking a question, as a pre-task activity, can be useful in creating basic content information and is important for assessing learning. In other words, pre-assignment questions can open the way for the teacher by helping students anticipate content and assess their prior knowledge.

Questioning strategies can take the form of closed or open questions. The first can be used to build a knowledge base or to test content knowledge. These are questions that usually require only one correct answer and can only be answered by students who already know the answer. Here is an illustrative example: What are the neighboring countries of Algeria? To do this, the teacher asks a question and waits for the student to answer or ask him to answer. One of the students answers. Then the teacher asks another question and waits for the students to answer or ask him to answer. In this technique, getting the correct answer from students is greatly appreciated. Teacher Interrogation is a technique for organizing learning conversations, engaging in content and assessment. The

teacher uses questions to determine if students are familiar with the content. In this approach, the teacher asks all questions, knows the answers, and students are expected to provide the correct answers. In the event of failure, the teacher interferes by providing the correct answer to ensure mastery of knowledge.

The second type of question, open questions, can be answered by any student. They are useful tools for discovering student ideas about phenomena. Open questions encourage students to think. This approach aims to encourage interaction and rhetoric in the classroom to learn content and gain new perspectives. Students' answers are appreciated, whether correct or incorrect. Basically, teachers use open questions to help students express their thoughts.

4. Effective Questioning Strategies

For Widdowson. H.G. (1999) and Wallace. Michael, J. (1995)⁶, effective questioning sessions in the classroom require prior preparation. Questions should be geared to achieve well-defined objectives. An instructor should ask questions that will force students to use their higher order thinking skills to be developed. In addition, an important aspect of classroom interaction is how the instructor handles student responses. When an instructor asks a question, students can answer, ask a question, or not give an answer. The instructor can interfere, in case of failure from the part of addressees, by providing the expected answers. Then, it is time to introduce the material to be taught.

The most important characteristic of the class is the interaction between the teacher and the learners. Questions are crucial whether we target at engaging learners in higher order thinking skills, testing and assessing prior knowledge or introducing and inculcating new material. Thus, questions are essential tools for teaching and learning.

Research on questioning has given clear indications of the practices that work well in the classroom. Questions are asked for a

variety of purposes such as engaging, challenging, leading students through planned sequences, promoting higher order thinking skills like evaluating and problem solving, anticipating content or checking prior knowledge...

Questions are the core at every stage in education around which all communication between teacher and students takes place. They are essential means of teaching and lie at the very heart of developing critical thinking abilities in students. Scholars claim that skillful questioning performs: a number of important functions.

Socially, it helps to establish relationships and integrate different groups through face-to-face interaction. Psychologically, it assists in creating, developing and maintaining a healthy emotional and intellectual climate as well as establishing appropriate levels of motivation. Educationally, the questions can assist learners to obtain information. It may probe the extent of learners' prior learning before a new subject is introduced, help to revise earlier learning or consolidate recent teaching and learning. More than that, the question helps learners to focus and clarify, and thus have new thoughts and perceptions.

There are many examples of this kind of method in the Qur'an. For example, there was a dialogue between Allah and the angel on the purpose of creating Adam. In Surat al-Baqarah (2: 30) the angel's question: "*Will you place therein one who will act corruptly therein and shed blood, while we hallow Your praise and glorify You*" comes in response to Allah announcement that a khalifah will be created on earth. In response to this question Allah says, "Verily I know what you do not know".

Question and answer also takes place between Allah and the Prophet Abraham when the latter insisted on seeing how his Lord gives life to the dead. In Surat al-Baqarah (2: 260) the question "*Do*

you not believe?' is addressed by Allah to the Prophet Abraham after he had asked Him how life is given to the dead. The issue here is not that he had doubt in his Lord but he wanted a clear picture about the power of God so that he would be satisfied and live with it.

Watt, W. (1988) states that this style is very similar to what has been suggested by the modern educational scholars. They notice that it is useful for teachers when they frame questions to distinguish two types of questions. They are, first, the questions which test knowledge and are referred to as lower order cognitive questions, and the second, the questions which create knowledge and are referred to as higher order cognitive questions. Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion suggest that it might be easier initially to think of them as fact questions and thought questions. Lower order cognitive questions include recall or knowledge, comprehension and application, whereas higher order cognitive questions, on the other hand involve analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Therefore, according to the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives classification suggested by Bloom, there are six levels of classifying questions. Questions at each level require a response which uses a different kind of thought.

5. The Prophet's Questioning Strategies

One Day, Abdullah bin Amr came to the messenger of Allah and asked "Is it vanity if I wear a nice cloth?" The Prophet answered, "No." When Abdullah said "Okay" and asked "Is it vanity if I cook and invite people?" the messenger of Allah answered, "No." "So, what is vanity?" asked Abdullah. The messenger of Allah said: "Vanity is underestimating the right and looking down on people". When a companion asked the Prophet "Whom should I do favour?" the Prophet answered "Do firstly your mother, then your father favour". "One day, people asked to the beloved Prophet "Oh, the messenger of Allah. Which of the believers is more virtuous?" Our

Prophet ordered, "The one whom the Muslims are safe from the harms of his/her tongue and his/her hand".

In Kamal Sharawy's (2014. P45) view⁷, "*question-answer method stands out as one of the most used methods in hadiths*". As it is seen in the examples above, companions would ask questions to the Prophet Muhammad about various subjects that they wanted to learn. AktaranAzbek (1991. p 149) stated that the Prophet Muhammad encouraged companions to ask questions with sayings like "Knowledge is treasure, its key is question." "Cure of ignorance is to ask." "Be together with scholars, spend time with them, ask people who know, be friend with people who know." and "Good question is half of the knowledge".

Munajjid (2011)⁸ argues that besides companions' asking questions to the Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad would sometimes ask questions to the companions in order to keep their curiosity about learning alive, motivate them, provide mental alertness or actualize better learning. He asked, "Who among you considers the wealth of his heirs dearer to him than his own wealth?" They replied, "There is none among us but loves his own wealth more." Then, the Prophet said, "Everyone loves his own wealth more" and "your wealth is whatever you spend before; the wealth of your heir is whatever you leave after your death". In this hadith, firstly he took attentions by asking a question about subject and made companions focused on learning, and then he wanted people to understand that it is more valuable for people to give sadaqah (meeting needs of needy people) from their wealth with their own hands in their lifetime. In another hadith, the Prophet said, "Whom do you consider as a chief wrestler?" When companions said, "He is the one whom other men cannot defeat him", the Prophet Muhammad said, "Chief wrestler is the one who controls himself when in a fit of anger". In this and suchlike hadiths, the Prophet Muhammad tried to provide

understanding, learning of a subject and attitude change by asking questions to the companions.

According to Kamal Shaarawy, (2014)⁹, when companions sometimes said that the messenger of Allah knew better when he asked a question, Prophet Muhammad answered his own questions. One day the Prophet asked to the Muadh bin Jabal “Do you know the right of Allah on people?” Muadh bin Jabal answered, “The messenger of Allah knows better.” The Prophet Muhammad said, “The right of Allah on people is people’s being servant to Allah and not associating anything with Allah.” Then, he continued asking “As long as they do this, what is the right of the servants upon Allah, do you know? When Muadh gave him the floor again, he said, “It is Allah’s not punishing them”. He asked companions: “What do you say about fornication and stealing?” Companions said: “The messenger of Allah knows the best.” So, the Prophet informed them that they are unpleasant things and people should avoid them. As it is seen in the examples, the Prophet Muhammad tried to keep attentions alive, motivate, make companions think, make subject be actively and permanently learnt.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “*Do you know who is bankrupt?*” They said, “*The one without money or goods is bankrupt.*” The Prophet said, “*Verily, the bankrupt of my nation are those who come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasting, and charity, but also with insults, slander, consuming wealth, shedding blood, and beating others. The oppressed will each be given from his good deeds. If his good deeds run out before justice is fulfilled, then their sins will be cast upon him and he will be thrown into the Hellfire.*” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2581).

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْمُفْلِسُ قَالُوا الْمُفْلِسُ فِيْنَا مَنْ لَا دِرْهَمَ لَهُ وَلَا مَتَاعَ فَقَالَ إِنَّ الْمُفْلِسَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَأْتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِصَلَاةٍ وَصِيَامٍ وَزَكَاةٍ وَيَأْتِي قَدْ شَتَمَ هَذَا وَقَذَفَ هَذَا وَأَكَلَ مَالَ هَذَا وَسَفَكَ دَمَ هَذَا وَضَرَبَ هَذَا فَيُعْطَى هَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ فَإِنْ فَنِيَتْ حَسَنَاتُهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُقْضَى مَا عَلَيْهِ أَخَذَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ فَطُرِحَتْ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ طُرِحَ فِي النَّارِ. 2581 صحيح مسلم كتاب البر والصلوة والآداب باب تحريم الظلم.

Alkanderi, L (2001, 48) stated that the prophet, instead of narrating and telling, chose the questioning strategy, aiming at anticipating content through testing one's previously known material. If the addressee fails to recall and display already known information, the teacher provides the right answers. In the prophet's case, it is an opportunity to pass his teachings.

In the case of this Hadith, and in the prophet's companions' understanding, a bankrupt is someone without money or good. This answer served for the prophet as an opportunity to correct a wrong understanding and to teach some fundamentals to his companions. In Kitabu'l-Muwazana, Humaydi distinguished three categories of people: "those whose good deeds surpass their misdeeds, those whose misdeeds surpass their good deeds and those whose good deeds are equal to their misdeeds."

As stated by the Quran explicitly, Alotaibi, S. (2014. p 49)¹⁰ mentioned that *"the first group will achieve salvation. People in the second group will suffer anguish in proportion to the amount of their misdeeds due to the fact that their misdeeds surpass their good deeds, and thanks to Allah's mercy, people of the third group will go to Heaven, they are those in Purgatory."*

Hussin, N. H. and Tamuri, A. H. (2014)¹¹ explain that in the prophet's companions' minds, the bankrupt is a person who had money but then lost it. But, according to the Messenger of Allah

(May Allah exalt his mention and protect him from imperfection) the bankrupt is the one who had lots of good deeds but lost them because of his bad treatment he had towards the others. Completing ones religious obligations is not sufficient so that Allah is pleased with us .What matters most is the real intention of our acts of devotion. If they are truly for Allah, they must prevent us from committing acts of injustice and immorality. The right and expected answer by the Prophet is that a Muslim has to take strict care in the performance of obligations, but he has to take similar care in his dealings, manners and morals.

6. CONCLUSION

The Prophet used a variety of teaching methods to instruct his companions, such as telling stories and making gestures to illustrate his point. In one instance, the Prophet said, "*I and the person who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this,*" putting his index and middle fingers together (Al-Bukhari, 2000, Vol. 8, Book 73, No. 34). Another approach was to draw simple graphic illustrations to convey some of his abstract ideas.

One of the most important aims of Islam education is to discover and improve abilities of humans who are born with knowing nothing from the wombs of their mothers and self-realization. The first teacher-educator who was charged to achieve this aim was the Prophet Muhammad. He tried to make depreciated and retrogressive society liveable again with education-teaching activities, even though he faced various difficulties. The Prophet Muhammad, one of his duties was teaching, he attached importance to teaching people revelations that he received from Allah, informing them, spreading knowledge, making learned things actual, making actualized things permanent and constant (Yavuz, 1998)¹². His education and teaching activities were the first original model of Islamic education and practices.

According to Kamal Shaarawy, (2014)¹³. The Prophet Muhammad's learning-teaching methods, that were extracted from his education activities, with them he tried to form a new world view on people and built a new society, are: Telling, learning-teaching by observation, demonstration, learning-teaching by comparison, question-answer, learning by doing-experiencing methods. In addition to learning-teaching methods which are used in today's educational understanding, there are methods which reflect personality, way of communication, education understanding of the Prophet Muhammad, peculiar to himself. These are teaching by developing empathy, one to one/face to face learning-teaching, and learning-teaching by writing methods.

REFERENCES:

1. Al-Ghazali, M. (1997). *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* [The Revival of the Religious Sciences] (with commentary by Al-'Imam al-Zabidi) (Vols. 1-6) (4th ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Khayr.
2. Alkanderi, L (2001). Exploring education in Islam Al-Ghazali's model of the master-pupil relationship applied to educational relationships within the Islamic family. Doctoral dissertation: The Pennsylvania State University.
3. Alotaibi, S. (2014). *Study of Islamic Teaching Methods in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green State University. Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/pg_
4. Damodharan, V. S., & Rengarajan, V. (2007). Innovative methods of teaching. In *Learning Technologies and Mathematics Middle East Conference, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman*. Retrieved from: http://math.arizona.edu/~atp-mena/conference/proceedings/Damodharan_Innovative_Methods.pdf
5. Hussin, N. H., Noh, M. A. C., & Tamuri, A. H. (2014). The religious practices teaching pedagogy of Islamic education excellent teachers. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(16), 239. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n16p239
6. Kamal Shaarawy (2014), The Teaching Methods of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); The Message International Magazine <https://messageinternational.org/the-teaching-methods-of-the-prophet-muhammad-pbuh/>

7. Khamis, M., Mohd, R., Md Salleh, A., & Nawi, A. (2014). Do Religious Practices Influence Compliance Behaviour of Business Zakat among SMEs?. *Journal Of Emerging Economies And Islamic Research*, 2(2), 25-40. doi:10.24191/jeeir.v2i2.9622
8. Munajjid, S.M.S. A. (2011), *Islam Question and Answer*. Available from: <https://islamqa.info/en/146238>
9. O'Malley, J. Michael and Anna U. Chamot .1999.*Learning Strategies in Second.Language Acquisition*. Cambridge UniversityPress
10. Richards, Jack C et al. 1992. *Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*. Second edition. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited.
11. Wallace. Michael, J. 1995. *Training Foreign Language Teachers*. CUP
12. Widdowson. H.G.1999. *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford UniversityPress.

Margins:

¹ Al-Ghazali, M. (1997). *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*[The Revival of the Religious Sciences] (with commentary by Al-'Imam al-Zabidi) (Vols. 1-6) (4th ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Khayr.

² Alkanderi, L (2001). Exploring education in Islam Al-Ghazali's model of the master-pupil relationship applied to educational relationships within the Islamic family. Doctoral dissertation: The Pennsylvania State University.

³ www.kotob.hypermart.net/joso4htm, quoting 'Abd Allah al-Ghunayman, MukhtaÖar Minhaj al-sunna li-Ibn Taymiyya, I, 12.

⁴ O'Malley, J. Michael and Anna U. Chamot .1999.*Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge UniversityPress

⁵ Khamis, M., Mohd, R., Md Salleh, A., & Nawi, A. (2014). Do Religious Practices Influence Compliance Behaviour of Business Zakat among SMEs?. *Journal Of Emerging Economies And Islamic Research*, 2(2), 25-40. doi:10.24191/jeeir.v2i2.9622

⁶ Wallace. Michael, J. 1995. *Training Foreign Language Teachers* .CUP and Widdowson. H.G.1999. *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford UniversityPress.

⁷ Kamal Shaarawy (2014), *The Teaching Methods of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); The Message International Magazine* <https://messageinternational.org/the-teaching-methods-of-theprophet-muhammad-pbuh/>

⁸ Munajjid, S.M.S. A. (2011), *Islam Question and Answer*. Available from: <https://islamqa.info/en/146238>

⁹ Kamal Shaarawy (2014), *The Teaching Methods of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); The Message International Magazine* <https://messageinternational.org/the-teaching-methods-of-theprophet-muhammad-pbuh/>

¹⁰ Alotaibi, S. (2014). *Study of Islamic Teaching Methods in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green State University. Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/pg_

¹¹ Hussin, N. H., Noh, M. A. C., & Tamuri, A. H. (2014). The religious practices teaching pedagogy of Islamic education excellent teachers. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(16), 239. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n16p239

¹² Yavuz T. (2017) Ottoman Turkish in the high school curriculum: current language planning discussions in Turkey. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 18:3, pages 264-282.

¹³ Kamal Shaarawy (2014), The Teaching Methods of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); The Message International Magazine <https://messageinternational.org/the-teaching-methods-of-the-prophet-muhammad-pbuh/>