

Innovation of Questioning Strategies and Techniques by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Education System, with Particular Reference to the Hadith Reported by Abu Umamah

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Abstract:

The pedagogical practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provide a timeless model of education rooted in wisdom, engagement and adaptability. Among these, his innovative questioning techniques are a cornerstone of effective teaching. This article examines the Prophet's (PBUH) use of questions, focusing on the hadith reported by Abu Umamah (RA), and explores their relevance to contemporary education trends. The study highlights how he employed questions to convey knowledge, stimulate critical thinking, foster curiosity and nurture moral growth, tailoring his approach to the intellectual and emotional capacities of his audience. The hadith where the Prophet (PBUH) asks, "*Shall I not inform you of the most beloved deeds to Allah?*" exemplifies his use of open-ended, thought-provoking questions to captivate attention, encourage introspection and create memorable learning experiences. His mastery of this approach transformed passive listeners into active participants, ensuring his messages resonated deeply with diverse audiences. Drawing parallels with modern educational frameworks like inquiry-based learning and the Socratic Method, the article underscores the compatibility of the Prophet's (PBUH) techniques with contemporary best practices. Incorporating these strategies into classrooms can enhance engagement, promote critical thinking, and foster ethical reasoning. Additionally, the spiritual and moral dimensions of his questions align with the Islamic philosophy of *tarbiyah*, emphasizing character development alongside intellectual growth. This study advocates for integrating the prophetic model of teaching into modern education to create more engaging and transformative learning environments.

Keywords: *Innovation, Questioning Strategies, Prophet Muhammad, Abu Umamah (RA), Islamic Pedagogy*

1. Introduction:

In the name of Allah most gracious most merciful, all praise is due to Allah, peace and blessing be upon the beloved and noblest Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).

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Islam is a guidance of any kind of knowledge and the enhancement of educational value, Islam as a religion recommend knowledge and recognition of the Prophet as a compassionate of this nation. This is why the very instruction was specifically on considering teaching as a profession:

"إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا"²

“Verily I have been sent as a teacher.”

The above Hadith critically examines the matter of teaching profession as if it is the essence of the mission of the messenger of Allah. Also, it instructs that the religion of Islam adheres to the real teachings of religions, seeking useful knowledge and application of the Islamic ideals of quality and brotherhood of mankind.

Education, whether modern or ancient, is aimed at perpetuating the culture of the society. Western education attached considerable importance to this aspect of training; the introduction of western oriented education was inclusively due to the imitation of western culture which becomes very rampant in academic institutions and from there to our Muslim societies. Culture is the identity of people as defined by Sule that:

*“Culture is the customs and custooms, the characters and the characteristics, the manners and mannerisms, the philosophy and ideology of people.”*³

Indeed, Allah conferred a great favor on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and instructing them the Book and wisdom, while before that they had been in manifest error.⁴

The life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is full of strategies and techniques in which the Prophet knew how to approach the target, attract his attention, draw his heart nearer to him and then start to invite him to Islam or to educate him if he was already a Muslim. Marvelous are the techniques and methodologies that were adopted by our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him). Indeed, such methods are to be emulated by those who took the responsibility of transmitting the knowledge by following his honorable steps and task themselves with that honorific burden.

2. Ibn e Mâjah, Muhammad bin Yazeed, *Al-Sunan*, Riyadh: Darussalam li Nashr wa al Touzih, 2009, Hadith#: 229, p.43

3. Sule, Y.M. an interview with N.T.A Abuja. Nigeria. 2nd Oct, 2010

4. Aal-i-Imrân, 3:164

2. Islamic Pedagogy

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word pedagogy comes from the Greek *paidagōgia*, which consists of *paid* means “adult” and *agō* means “lead”); while, literal meaning is: to lead the child, which nowadays, is used in the English-speaking world to refer to the whole context of instruction, learning and the actual operations involved therein. Likewise, in the English-speaking world the term pedagogy refers to the science or theory of educating.⁵

In fact, it is closely connected to other terms, such as teaching, learning, education, curriculum and instruction. It may not have a specific definition. However, it can be defined as the profession of teaching, as well as preparatory training or instruction.

According to some sources pedagogy means the art or science of being a teacher, as well as the correct use of teaching strategies.⁶

It is amongst the top priorities required by Islam to adhere its very beginning cherished education, due to the fact that Islam is a religion which values education. In fact, Islam of nowadays the same as it was in the last 1400 years ago and will continue by the grace of God the Almighty.

Islamic Pedagogy represents the fundamentals Islamic principles of education that guide how Muslims should handle the process of learning in particular and Islamic scholarship in general. However, It is to formulate and introduce new strategic educational system that reflect the teaching approach supported by the Qur’ân and the Prophetic Sunnah. Almighty Allah says:

"اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ"⁷

“Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists).”

"وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا"⁸

“... and say: ‘My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.’”

"قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ"⁹

“... Say: ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not?’ It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e. get a lesson from Allah's Signs and Verses).”

5. Cambridge Dictionary Online: Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus, Dictionary.cambridge.org.

6. The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, Houghton Mifflin Company, 3rd ed. 1992.

7. Alâlaq, 96: 1

8. Tâhâ, 20:114

9. Az-Zumar, 39:9

"يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ" ¹⁰

"... Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge..."

"إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ" ¹¹

"... It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah..."

Moreover, in many authentic *hadiths*, where Muslims are urged to exert much effort in pursuit of knowledge, as Anas Ibn Mâlik narrated that Prophet (peace be upon him) says:

"طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ" ¹²

"The pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim."

"بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً." ¹³

"Convey even one verse from me..."

Hazrat Mu`âwiyah narrated:

"مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ" ¹⁴

"Whoever for whom Allah wants (all) good, He grants him understanding of the religion."

Therefore, each and every Islamic education program should include different ways of interpretations and perspectives, related to the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition aspect, with recognition of the diverse backgrounds of students, teachers in particular and schools at large. ¹⁵

Islamic education certainly is more than that can hardly be imagined, it has highest objective in areas of character building, growth and development of an Islamic personality. As Muslims, our educational target is to develop the personalities of our children to extend that they will be conscious of their responsibility to Allah the Almighty and fellow humans and to ensure that we prepare a new generation for leadership.

10. Al-Mujâdalah, 58:11

11. Fâtir, 35:28

12. Ibn Mâjah, *Al-Sunan*, H: 224, p.42

(Some scholars of *Hadîth* have ranked this *hadîth* as *da'îf* (i.e., of a weak chain of transmission), whereas some others, such as Nâsirud-Dîn Al-Albânî, have classified it as *sahîh* (authentic)

13. Bukhari, Muhammad bin Isma'il, *Al-Jâme Al-Sahîh*, Riyadh: Darussalam li Nashr wa al Touzih, 2nd ed.1999, H: 3461, p.582

14. Bukhari, *Al-Jâme Al-Sahîh*, H: 71, p.17

15. Abdul-Fattâh, M. M. *Towards An Islamic Pedagogy*, America: Islamic University of North America, 1st ed. 2012, p.40-41

Initially, anything about education emanate from the creature of the universe, created man, and taught him a statement, through a channel in which He sent down his knowledge to His messengers and from them to the professionals of education.

Islam makes acquisition of knowledge compulsory for all Muslims irrespective of gender, age, tribe or nation. In Islam, man is free to investigate not only the things on earth but explore the region in space. A Qur'anic verse reminds the Muslim that He (Allah) had made subservient to thee whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Even in the Surat Al-Fatiha, which is regarded as the mother of the Qur'an, reference is made to Allah as:

“Lord of the heaven..”¹⁶

The Qur'an sites “the sun and the moon follow a reckoning and the herbs do obeys” an expression of a basic geographical phenomenon which anecdotes its discovery in the west by several countries.

However, Nigeria for example being a “secular” nation has not realized the importance of religious education. It relegates religious education to the background.

As can be well understood, there was very little liaison between the early Islamic and the western system of education. However, with the independence of Nigeria, things changed a greater ideal. In 1954, the government introduced a scheme by which untrained junior primary school teachers attended courses at the school for Arabic studies, and between 1954 and 1961, more than two-third of all primary school teachers had received this training, thus enabling them to improve their position and raise their standard of education. In 1960, the year of independence, this school organized a post-secondary course in Arabic and Islamic studies as preliminary to the establishment of the Abdullahi Bayero College. In this way a concerted effort was made to direct some of the students from the Ilm school and the Muslim higher Institutions towards University and post-secondary modern education. The then northern ministry of education and Abdullahi Bayero college, Kano (which is now Bayero University, Kano) worked out a comprehensive plan whereby the traditional system of imparting Arabic and Islamic education was channeled towards westernized system, so that a general uniformity at the pre-University level was attained. The school of Arabic studies at Sokoto also made a start in this direction.

16. Al-Fatihah, 1:3

Students of Muslim higher institutions, however, suffered from a lack of knowledge of English and modern school subjects. But as far as their knowledge of Arabic and Islam was concerned they had a solid traditional background.¹⁷

3. Questioning Strategy and Techniques as in the Hadith Reported by Abu Umamah

Among the methods that were innovated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is the Questioning strategies and techniques, which can be attested to by recalling the famous hadith of musnad Ahmad in which:

Abu Umamah reported: A young man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and he said, “O Messenger of Allah, give me permission to commit adultery.” The people turned to rebuke him, saying, “Quiet! Quiet!” The Prophet said, “Come here.” The young man came close and he told him to sit down. The Prophet said, “Would you like that for your mother?” The man said, “No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you.” The Prophet said, “Neither would people like it for their mothers. Would you like that for your daughter?” The man said, “No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you.” The Prophet said, “Neither would people like it for their daughters. Would you like that for your sister?” The man said, “No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you.” The Prophet said, “Neither would people like it for their sisters. Would you like that for your aunts?” The man said, “No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you.” The Prophet said, “Neither would people like it for their aunts.” Then, the Prophet placed his hand on him and he said, “O Allah, forgive his sins, purify his heart, and guard his chastity.” After that, the young man never again inclined to anything sinful.¹⁸

Imagine a young man coming to the Scholar in your area or in a nearby mosques with such a strange request: “Can I be permitted to commit Zina (fornication/adultery)?” What do you expect young man the kind of response will he receive?

I belief such shocked and angry reproach is the most likely reaction of the attendees and the Scholar; in fact, would be such as “Shame on you! How dare you mention such despicable things in this dignified place and, even worse, request to commit it?”

17. Fafunwa A. Babs, *History of education in Nigeria*. Ibadan. University of Ibadan. Nigeria. 1998, p.65-66

18. Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, Musnad Mukatharin min as Sahabah, Riyadh: Darussalam li Nashr wa al Touzih, 2011, Hadith: 22211, p.1601

Abdullah, M. *A Prophetic Pedagogical framework for Islamic schools*. 115th ed., Australia. University of South Australia Adelaide South Australia. 2017.

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4. Discussion and Analysis:

But actually, the Prophet (peace be upon him) aimed to strengthen and fortify him in his battle with temptations rather than alienate or undermine him. He our beloved Prophet sought to empower the young man rather than destroying him.

However, giving attention to the youth, understanding their problems and heartedly taking care for them, whatever the deficiency they may have, are all elements of the Prophet's art of empowerment. In the hadith, the Companions themselves were not able to contain their shock. Perhaps this would be the common reaction of humans and community leaders if faced with a similar approach.

Such were some of the techniques and methods of education innovated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) by which he earned the hearts of almost all those he invited to Islam. Unfortunately, in our present time, we suffer from lack of strategies which take care of issues in such a noble manner and thus draw them nearer to Allah and His straight path. Rather, some of those who are deemed as Du'at and who see themselves as doing a great service to Islam, they do nothing but making people scared of the religion of monotheism, mercy and peace.

The Prophet (PBUH) innovated effective strategies and techniques for knowledge seekers by calling the young man and embracing him warmly, he diverted his attention by motivated questions, such as Would you like that for your mother, Daughter, Sisters, aunts. The Prophet's innovated techniques are comprehensible to even the common person to be convinced. Because it is practically shown by the Young man's response No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you". In fact the strategy is useful for addressing the literate and illiterate to acquire direct access to differentiate between good and bad. Likewise, comparisons of things to motivate and improve his reasoning, and above all, the supplication for his sins to be forgiven, his heart to be purified and his chastity to be guarded.

5. Conclusion:

Following this Prophetic example is crucial when dealing with issues pertaining youths as it does not only determine if they will commit crime or not, most importantly, if they would ever come back to you discuss and find answers for their future problems or not.

The Prophet, however, dealt with the situation as a great innovator of different skills of teaching; he drew the young man nearer to him, discussed his problem rationally, and thus succeeded in convincing him to the extent that, as the hadith narrator reported, the man would pay no heed to any temptation after that.

Indeed, the Prophet did not let the incident just pass without his unique spiritual touch. Placing his hand on the young man and praying for him must have left an unforgettable effect.

6. Findings and Recommendations:

- ❖ It is amongst the top priorities required by Islam to adhere its very beginning cherished education, due to the fact that Islam is a religion which values education.
- ❖ Indeed, the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is full of strategies and techniques in which the Prophet knew how to approach the target, attract his attention, and then start to invite him to Islam or to educate him if he was already a Muslim.
- ❖ It is important for teachers to innovate strategies to involve their students in learning activity using demonstration and active best teaching's techniques.
- ❖ Teachers may apply the Prophetic role model for teaching in improving students learning and utilizing their full potential.
- ❖ The Prophet's multifaceted innovational techniques for teaching are relevant and meaningful to elevate student's inspiration and motivation for active participation in educational system.
- ❖ The great personality of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is an excellent model and complete syllabus that includes all fields of life. The Qur'an Says: "Verily you have in the Prophet of Allah an excellent model, for him who fears Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah much". Chapter 33:41