TEACHING PEDAGOGY IN ISLAM: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF A SELECTED QURANIC VERSE

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ABSTRAK

Pendidikan yang berkualitas adalah alat transformasi; salah satu atributnya adalah pedagogi pengajaran yang digunakan. Metode pengajaran tradisional - narasi - telah ditinggalkan untuk pemecahan masalah dan eksplorasi, yang diasumsikan bertentangan dengan Islam. Sementara itu, Islam diterima sebagai agama ilahi oleh umat Muslim dan non-Muslim, begitu pula dengan Al-Quran - kitab suci terakhir. Sudah menjadi keyakinan yang kuat di kalangan umat Muslim bahwa Al-Quran menyentuh semua aspek kehidupan, termasuk pedagogi pendidikan dan pengajaran. Meskipun secara luas, meskipun salah, diyakini bahwa pedagogi pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam Islam berbasis naratif - hafalan - yang berbeda dengan pedagogi pengajaran dan pembelajaran modern yang berbasis pemecahan masalah dan eksploratif, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sebuah ayat Al-Quran untuk pedagogi pengajarannya melalui lensa kerangka kerja konseptual Zona Perkembangan Proksimal (ZPD). Hasil analisis konten menunjukkan bahwa ayat Alquran yang dipilih - QS 2:260 sangat sesuai dengan kerangka kerja konseptual ZPD dan bahwa pedagogi pengajaran Islam mencakup pemecahan masalah, kolaborasi, diskusi, dan pembelajaran partisipatif. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menambah literatur yang relevan dan terbatas tentang pedagogi pengajaran Islam.

Kata kunci: Al-Quran, Zona Perkembangan Proksimal, Analisis Konten, Pedagogi Pengajaran

ABSTRACT

Quality education is a transformational tool; one of its attributes is the teaching pedagogy employed. The traditional teaching method – narration – has been abandoned for problem-solving and exploratory, which are assumed to be antithetical to Islam. Meanwhile, Islam is accepted as a divine religion by Muslims and non-Muslims, and so is the Quran – the last Divine book. It is a strong belief among the Muslim faithful that the Quran touches all life's aspects, including education and teaching pedagogies. While it is widely, albeit falsely, believed that the teaching and learning pedagogy in Islam is narrative-based – memorization – which is in contrast with the modern-day teaching and learning pedagogy of problem-solving and exploratory, this study aims to analyze a Quranic verse for its teaching pedagogy through the lens of the conceptual framework of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The content analysis results show that the selected Quran verse – Quran 2:260 perfectly aligns with the conceptual framework of ZPD and that Islamic teaching pedagogies include problem-solving, collaboration,

discussion, and participatory learning. So, the study adds to the limited relevant literature on Islamic teaching pedagogies.

Keywords: Quran, Zone of Proximal Development, Content Analysis, Teaching Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential tool in human life. It is the instrument for social mobility, upward socioeconomic status (Breen & Müller, 2020), human capital development, and social reformation which can unlock an individual's critical thinking (Freire, 2012). All these indicators and others alike can be made possible with quality education. Quality education is a type of education that focuses on the whole of a child and prepares him or her for life (Oparaduru, 2021). While there are many factors contributing to the quality of education, the focus of this study is the factor concerning the teaching and learning process – teaching methodology. The human dimension, which includes the knowledge and skills of school staff, is a fundamental resource to ensure quality education. (Sharif, 2012). Although the quality of teaching is always attributed to the teachers' teaching method (Oparaduru, 2021), there is no one-size-fits-all effective teaching method (Santrock, 2011).

According to Santrock (2011), at the broad level, there are two major approaches to teaching: constructivist and direct instruction. The constructivist approach is learner-centered and states that students actively construct knowledge and understanding with the teacher's – considered a learning facilitator –support (Santrock, 2011). The constructivist teaching approach encourages collaboration among students or between the teacher and students in creating knowledge and understanding without room for memorization (Santrock, 2011). In contrast, direct instruction is teacher-centered; thus, it is completely under the control and direction of the teacher (Santrock, 2011). Basically, the direct instruction approach contains elements of narration and memorization – rote learning. Erroneously, teaching pedagogy in Islam is thought to be narrative and memorization-based. Whereas in the Western world, teaching pedagogies include project-based, inquiry-based, and cooperative learning which must be designed to develop "intellectual, emotional, and social growth, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills." (Adeoye et al., 2024, p. 13). Liu et al. (2017) opine that teaching methods should be based on students' needs and interests.

In their study, Assa'idi et al. (2021) note that the Quran states the principles of educational leadership as responsibility, trust, consultation, good role modeling, enforcement

of rules or laws for enjoining good acts and forbidding crimes, and just, while the study of Kusmaryono & Basir (2020) showed that there are one-to-one scaffolding and peer-scaffolding when they reviewed Quran 80: 1 – 10. Furthermore, it is believed in some Islamic discourses that seeking knowledge is one of the purposes of creating humanity, and the teaching methods employed include student-teacher discussion, questioning, demonstration, reciting, memorization, and story-telling (Narendra & Phukan, 2019). Some believe that the basic rules for effective teaching methodologies prescribed in the Quran are wisdom, arguing methods, and instruction (Arif et al., 2019). The study by Alkouatli (2018) showed that the teaching and learning pedagogies in Islam include differentiated learning and collaboration – speaking, questioning, and doing together. He further argues that while doing together is effective as it allows the student to learn by doing with his teacher, speaking together is dialogical which contributes to students' critical thinking.

Moreover, Guenther (2006) argues that the teaching pedagogies of Medieval Muslim thinkers include, learning by doing, problem-solving, and collaborative learning (Ibn Sahnun), deductive reasoning with little emphasis on memorization (al-Jahiz), and demonstration method using analogy, syllogism, and logic and scaffolding (al-Farabi). While he further notes that Ibn Sina's teaching methods entail debate and the most effective teaching method is to make learning interesting, exciting, and enjoyable for the child, al-Ghazali's was based on logic and learning by doing.

Despite the Holy Quran being considered a divine book that speaks about everything including teaching pedagogy, there are still beliefs in some quarters that the only teaching pedagogy in Islam is memorization. Although a few studies have been done on teaching strategies in Islam (Arif et al., 2019), there is no adequate exploration of the Quran for teaching pedagogy. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by conducting a qualitative content analysis of a selected Quranic verse. The study intends to investigate Islamic teaching pedagogies by analyzing a Quranic verse through the lens of a conceptual framework of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). For a clear direction, the study proposes the research question: "Do Islamic perspectives on teaching pedagogy align with or differ from Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development theory"?

Qualitative content analysis is employed to analyze Quran 2 vs 260 to answer the research question through the elements of the Zone of Proximal Development, prescribed by Miller (2011). Content analysis analyses and investigates texts whose data are permanent based

on pre-existing codes or themes (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, it encourages re-analysis and re-examination for validation.

Since the data are obtained from the Quran, originally an Arabic Language text, the Sahih International Translated version of the Quran retrieved from *The Noble Qur'an* (n.d.) is used for its English meaning. The data – texts from the Quranic verse – are analyzed using the pre-existing themes obtained from Miller's (2011) explanation of the ZPD. The main element or theme of the ZPD I adopted in this study is collaborative problem-solving or guided participation, as highlighted by Miller (2011).

The English translation of Quran 2 verse 260 is herein:

"And remember when Abraham said, "My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead." Allah responded, "Do you not believe?" Abraham replied, "Yes I do, but just so my heart can be reassured." Allah said, "Then bring four birds, train them to come to you, then cut them into pieces, and scatter them on different hilltops. Then call them back, they will fly to you in haste. And so you will know that Allah is Almighty, All-Wise." (*Surat Al-Baqarah [2:260] - The Noble Qur'an*, n.d.)

DISCUSSION

Islam is seen as a divine religion by Muslims and non-Muslims and so is the Quran, the Divine Book. The Quran was sent to Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) about one thousand four hundred and forty-five years (1445) ago as a guide for humanity with numerous clear proofs (Q2 vs 185) and a complement to the previous holy books (Latipah, 2022). It is believed there is no matter concerning humans, animals, plants, and the entire environment left untouched in the Quran. It also serves as guidance, testimony, and proof for the believers, who are obligated, to adopt it as their primary source of reference and inspiration (Husnaini et al., 2021). The Quran consists of one hundred and fourteen (114) chapters and about six thousand six hundred and sixty-six verses (6666) covering topics or issues concerning education, wars, health, sciences, marriages, stories, and so on. It is a panoramic holy book that serves as the principal source for all knowledge – cultural and scientific – and it is impossible to separate it from the social life discourse (Assa'idi et al., 2021). Husnaini et al. (2021) argue that since the Quran was sent by God, who also created the universe, there is no problem bedeviling the world whose solution will be missing in the Quran unless it is not well explored.

For instance, the process of human developmental stages is explicitly stated in the Quran in more than a verse (Q23: 12 – 14; Q32: 7 – 9; Q15:29; and Q76:2). Similarly, Allah

mentions the bee and its benefits (in Q16: 68 – 69), the camel in verses such as (Q7:40; Q17:59; Q54:27; and Q88:17), the birds in (Q24:41; Q67:19 among others), and the cow (Q2:67; Q6:146). Moreover, Allah says: "And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And ever is Allah, of all things, encompassing." (Q4:126), " God Himself is the ultimate environment which surrounds and encompasses man" (Nasr, 2005, p. 66). Concerning education, there are various verses in the Quran. The first verse revealed was "Read in the name of your Lord who created" (Q96:1), Quran 16 vs 43 speaks about seeking knowledge (by asking) from the more knowledgeable person if you do not know, Allah talks about elevating knowledgeable people in degrees (Q 58:11), He refers to them as His witness together with the Angels (Q3:16), and informs Prophet Muhammad to seek knowledge from Him (Q16:114).

The zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the focus of this study, as coined by Lev Vygotsky, a social constructivist, is the range of tasks or operations that a child cannot learn or perform by himself or herself but can learn or perform with the assistance and guidance of a more skilled person – the more knowledgeable person (Santrock, 2011). In education, the teacher is the more competent individual, expected to facilitate students' learning. Miller (2011) defines the ZPD as the distance between the child's actual level of development relating to his ability to solve problems independently and the higher developmental level through problem-solving under the guidance of an adult. It can be deduced that collaboration with a more knowledgeable person in solving problems is a vital element of the ZPD. ZPD emphasizes the use of prompts, clues, modeling, leading questions, discussion, collaboration (joint participation), and problem-solving between the child and a more knowledgeable other (MKO) as essential ingredients to effective learning (Miller, 2011). There is a shift in development from working independently to working with a more skilled adult or person; thus instructors are sources of information and levers or steps through which the child moves from his current development (low) level to a higher developmental level (Jaroševskij et al., 1989). Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Miller 2011, p. 176) explains the relationship between low and high developmental levels as thus:

"The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the "buds" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits" of development. The actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively"

Santrock (2011) opines that teaching in ZPD involves the awareness of identifying students' level of development and taking advantage of their readiness to learn – upgrade from their current developmental level. An important concept that is considered related to ZPD is scaffolding. Although not used by Vygotsky, scaffolding is viewed as the gradual change in the level of support offered to the student by a more knowledgeable person (Santrock, 2011). Also, Gordon Wells (1999, as cited in Verenikina, 2003) states that scaffolding is a concept used to operationalize Vygotsky's ZPD, and involves educational attributes such as the dialogic nature of co-constructing knowledge. In essence, scaffolding is the gradual decrease in support students receive from the more skilled person as they move toward the upper developmental level. That is, as the students move up the ladder toward the upper limit, the assistance from the more skilled person reduces. Santrock (2011) echoes that asking probing questions is one of the essential ingredients of the scaffolding.
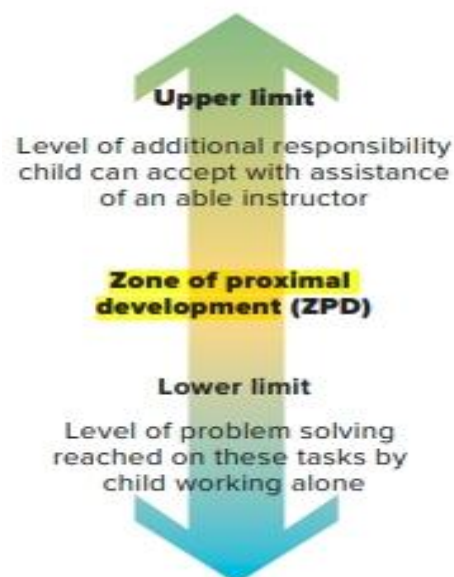
Adapted from Santrock (2017, p. 214)

Collaborative Problem-Solving or Guided Participation

Central to the ZPD is the interaction between two or more persons with one of them regarded as a more competent individual to co-construct conversion (Miller, 2011) that will translate into a meaningful outcome – a desired objective. The Quranic verse analyzed shows a clear collaboration between Allah (God) and Prophet Ibrahim to achieve a desired goal. The goal is for Prophet Ibrahim to understand the concept of life after death. Miller (2011) opines that the more skilled person builds on the child's current competencies by employing leading questions, use of clues, and discussion, while Santrock (2017) shares that the skilled assistant

presents a series of difficulties in assessing the level of the students. In this case, Allah, the Most Wise, the Most Knowledgeable, the Almighty, is the skilled helper who guides the Prophet. Prophet Ibrahim's first statement was "My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead." This statement indicates his level of cognitive development concerning the subject. He knew already that we would die and be resurrected – his present cognitive developmental level – but he was not certain how Allah – God – would bring the dead back to life – his intending higher cognitive developmental level. To confirm his developmental level, Allah's response to Prophet Ibrahim is "Do you not believe?" Allah used probing questions to detect his level. Believing in Allah is the basis of all other beliefs in Islamic traditions. Prophet Ibrahim's response to Allah's question was "Yes I do, but just so my heart can be reassured," which confirms his developmental level. Collaboration involves dialogue –discussion (Miller, 2011) – between the more competent person and the students, and this verse analyzed is immensely dialogical between Allah and Prophet Ibrahim.

The next dialogue or discussion between Allah and Prophet Ibrahim is problem-solving-based. Allah says "Then bring four birds, train them to come to you, then cut them into pieces, and scatter them on different hilltops." To show him how the dead would be brought back to life, Prophet Ibrahim was instructed to perform an experiment – a problem-solving method or learning by doing – call out the dead birds to discern how they would fly to him by Allah's Might. He did and saw it happen; hence, he attained certainty in his heart – a higher cognitive developmental level. The higher developmental level that Prophet Ibrahim attained helped him when he was thrown into the burning fire by his people. Because he saw the power of the Almighty when He brought the dead birds back to life, he was certain Allah would save him in His way despite the lead Angel offering his help.

The result conforms with Miller's (2011) prescribed elements of ZPD such as collaboration, use of clues, problem-solving, and discussion. Similarly, it follows the study of Narendra and Phukan (2019) which indicates that questioning, demonstration, and discussion are some of the teaching pedagogies in Islam. It aligns with teaching pedagogies prescribed by the Medieval Muslim thinkers. Guenther (2006) notes that Ibn Sahnun advised that teachers should encourage students to work independently and with others to solve a challenging task. Also, he opines that al-Farabi promoted participatory learning – a kind of dialogical learning between the teacher and the student – and that through demonstration by applying analogy and syllogism, the student understands the instruction. Al-Ghazali, in his submission,

recommended teachers should ensure students work correctly by themselves by providing them with the necessary information [instruction] (Guenther, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The qualitative content analysis of Quran 2 vs 260 for investigating the Islamic teaching pedagogy based on Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development shows a perfect alignment between the two. This implies that Islamic teaching pedagogies conform to the elements of ZPD such as collaborative and participatory learning, problem-solving, discussion, and questioning

Based on the result of this study and previous related studies, it is crystal clear that Islamic teaching pedagogies are not solely about memorization. They include a wide range of methods such as participatory, discussion, problem-solving, and collaboration which conform with the elements of ZPD. Medieval Muslim thinkers such as the famous ninth-century mathematician, al-Khwarizmi (c. 780-850), who developed the Arabic numerals and the oldest version of the trigonometry table (Lawton & Gordon, 2002), were successful and impactful to the whole world for their exploratory and problem-solving skills which can be seen in their writings on education and other study fields. Therefore, it is recommended that Islamic institutions should embrace and adopt these methods for effective teaching and learning process. Adopting the methods is the first path to producing Muslim critical thinkers who can have a similar or better impact than medieval Muslim thinkers. Consequently, Islamic nations will be developed and intellectually rule the world like the Golden Era.

Due to a limited timeframe, the study could only analyze a single Quranic verse out of the six thousand six hundred and sixty-six verses it contains. Further studies can be done to investigate Islamic teaching pedagogies based on Prophet Ibrahim's and Prophet Musa's Quranic stories.

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