

The Prophetic Methods of Teaching: A Legacy of Empowerment and Transformation

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Abstract

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) embodied a unique and all-encompassing method of imparting the foundational tenets of Islam, which were divinely revealed. His teachings spanned the breadth of human existence, encompassing facets of life, work, coexistence, and human relations, rendering them universally applicable across time and space. As both Allah's messenger and an exemplar for individual Muslims, the Prophet of Islam assumed a dual role. To present him as a paragon in every aspect of life, Muslims are encouraged to delve into the methods he employed for teaching and learning and to thoroughly delve into his Sunnah - his practices and traditions. This approach not only cultivates a comprehensive understanding of his life but also allows for the extraction of profound and invaluable lessons from it.

The study delves into the often-overlooked educational pedagogy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whose holistic approach to teaching and learning presents a unique perspective on Islam. Contrasting with the secular educational theories rooted in Western and Eurocentric ideologies, the research explores the multifaceted teaching methods employed by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) to educate individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and beliefs. Through exploratory research, drawing from Hadith, Sunnah, and the Prophet's (PBUH) Seerah, this study aims to revisit and uncover the diverse teaching methods and techniques employed by Prophet of Islam to nurture and educate his family, friends, companions, and even adversaries. The research provides insights into various aspects, including teaching strategies, applications, stages, and processes. The study initiates a comprehensive overview of the teaching methods and techniques used by the Prophet of Islam as part of his holistic approach to education. This foundational analysis serves as a tool for identifying critical issues that can guide further research in various areas. Ultimately, this research employs a critical analysis to illuminate the diverse teaching methods employed by Prophet of Islam and their relevance within the broader realm of pedagogical education. The study seeks to shed light on the enduring significance of these teaching methods and their potential impact on contemporary education.

KEYWORDS: Prophet, Teaching, Methods, Storytelling, Demonstration, Envoys.

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) employed a unique and comprehensive approach to imparting the foundational principles and concepts of Islam, which were divinely revealed. His teachings encompassed all aspects of life as well as human interactions, making them applicable at any place and time. The Prophet of Islam held the dual role of being messenger of Allah and a role model for individual Muslims. To establish him as a model in every facet of life, Muslims should delve into the methods of

teaching and learning that he employed, and extensively study his Sunnah (his practices and traditions). This approach fosters a holistic understanding of his life (Seerah) and allows for the extraction of valuable lessons from it.

A true follower of the Prophet (peace be upon him) should aim to live under his teachings and emulate his way of life. There should be no divide between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, and the transition from revelation to reason should be seamless. Consequently, the pedagogical methods employed by the Prophet of Islam are deserving of a thorough revisit, comprehension, and implementation by Muslims, particularly by Muslim educators.

Nevertheless, the pervasive influence of secular and modern education in the Muslim world and the compartmentalization of religious knowledge from other fields such as arts, social sciences, and sciences have hindered Muslim educators from studying the *Seerah*¹ of the Prophet of Islam to gain insights into his pedagogical methods for teaching and learning. This separation has resulted the loss of a holistic approach to education in an era marked by the prominence of secular education. However, this trend can be revitalized and reinvigorated through a renewed focus on studying the Prophet's (peace be upon him) pedagogical approach.

To illuminate the comprehensive pedagogical approaches of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, it's important to consider the divine guidance provided by Allah. He instructed the Prophet to invite people to His path using wisdom, fair preaching, and a gentle, respectful approach. The Quran states: "Invite to the Way of your Lord (Allah) with wisdom and fair preaching and argue with them in a better way. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided."² The primary responsibility entrusted to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) was to call people to the path of Allah. This task required various methods and techniques to achieve its intended goals. His teaching efforts began with his immediate family and relatives and eventually extended throughout the Arabian Peninsula and beyond during his lifetime. The techniques and methods employed by him were systematic, rational consistent, and practical, leading to significant success.

Despite facing challenging circumstances, the Prophet of Islam exemplified outstanding moral character during his prophethood. As a role model, he formed a community of believers around him who supported his efforts to spread Islam to other regions. This approach allowed the message of Islam to reach almost every corner of the world. Therefore, anyone who invites and guides others to Islam should make their message easily understandable and prioritize the most critical aspects while gradually addressing other important matters.

The Teaching Methods of Prophet of Islam and Their Relevance in Contemporary Times

The teaching techniques and methods employed by Prophet of Islam hold significant relevance in the context of contemporary education systems. These methods, which can be analyzed within the framework of educational practices, encompass various approaches, including:

➤ Storytelling Method of Teaching

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) often employed the method of storytelling as an effective means of imparting important lessons to the Muslims. He would recount stories from the lives of past Prophets, their nations, and sometimes individuals within those nations. These stories were carefully chosen and presented in a

¹ Biography of Prpphet Muhammad (PBUH)

² Al--Nahl 16:125

way that made them not only interesting but also instructive, allowing his companions to derive valuable lessons and admonitions from them. One prime example of this teaching approach is the story of the monk, the Magician, and the slave boy.³

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) would use storytelling to address various purposes, such as problem-solving, conveying information, or protecting his followers from harm. For instance, he employed this method when explaining concepts like righteousness, goodness, and beauty, guiding his followers on the right path, and warning them against harmful behaviors. Several Hadiths provide examples of this teaching method, including instructions on how to perform prayers, emphasizing the importance of greetings and how to greet one another, and underscoring the duty of showing kindness and respect to one's parents and the rights of parents.

Moreover, when the Prophet Muhammad employed storytelling as a teaching method, he often utilized techniques such as comparisons, analogies, and providing real-life examples. These techniques served to maintain the listeners' attention and minimize the risk of them becoming bored, aligning with modern pedagogical principles used in today's teaching and learning processes.

➤ **Teaching Method: Observation and Correction**

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) employed a valuable teaching approach by closely observing the actions of those around him and providing correction when necessary. There is an incident where a man entered the mosque to pray, and the Prophet keenly observed his prayer. After the man finished his prayer and greeted the Prophet, he was informed by the Prophet that he should pray again, as his previous prayer was not performed correctly. When this happened for the second time, the man humbly asked the Prophet to teach him the correct way to pray, which the Prophet did in great detail.⁴

The Holy Qur'an recognizes the Prophet of Islam as the supreme role model for humanity⁵ and urges people to follow his example.⁶ Prophet Muhammad, before and after receiving his prophethood, served as an exemplary guide through his emotions, thoughts, speech, behaviors, and life. His companions, having closely observed this model, dedicated their lives to learning and embodying the principles of the Islamic religion and its worldview. Their profound love for the Prophet Muhammad facilitated the process of learning and applying the tenets of the Islamic faith. Consequently, individuals who, in the pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah period, engaged in practices such as burying their daughters alive, mistreating the weak, seeking blood revenge, usurping the rights of others, engaging in usury, and deriving improper benefits transformed into "the golden generation" under the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad.

➤ **Demonstration Method of Teaching**

The teaching method employed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was one of demonstration through his actions. He exemplified important lessons through his behavior and interactions with others.

For instance, he once performed his prayers while carrying his granddaughter, Umama, from his daughter Zainab. When he stood up, he held her, and when he prostrated, he gently placed her down. This act was particularly significant in a society where daughters were often undervalued and even subjected to grave

³ Halawani, 2017

⁴ Bukhari 1759.

⁵ Al-Ahzab, 33:21

⁶ Al-Hashr, 59:7

injustices like being buried alive. The Prophet's actions served as a powerful message that daughters and women are equal in value to men and should be treated with the respect and care they deserve. It was a clear statement against the prevailing norms that marginalized and mistreated women.

Similarly, upon his daughter Fatimah's arrival, he would rise, gently take her hand, affectionately kiss her forehead, and warmly invite her to the seat he had occupied. This simple yet profound gesture demonstrated the importance of showing affection and respect to one's family members, particularly daughters.

In another instance, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took time to teach a companion about the timings of prayers by inviting him to stay with him for two days. Through this practical approach, the companion learned not only when to perform prayers but also how to do so correctly. This personalized instruction allowed for a deeper understanding and ensured that the knowledge was absorbed effectively.

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) didn't limit his teachings to religious matters alone. He also provided practical guidance in everyday tasks. For example, he once assisted a boy in the process of skinning a sheep that he had slaughtered. By actively participating in the task, he not only showed the correct way to do it but also emphasized the importance of hands-on learning and practical skills.

Overall, the Prophet Muhammad's teaching method through demonstration was highly effective in imparting both religious and practical knowledge. His actions served as powerful examples that people around him observed, internalized, and implemented in their own lives.

➤ **Question-Answer Method of Teaching**

The question-answer method played a prominent role in the teachings of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). Companions frequently posed questions to him on a wide range of subjects they sought to understand better. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) not only welcomed such inquiries but also encouraged them. This highlights the vital role of posing questions in the process of learning and teaching. Proverbs such as Knowledge is a treasure; its key is a question, Cure of ignorance is to ask, Be together with scholars, spend time with them, ask people who know, befriend with people who know, and A good question is half of the knowledge underscore the significance of this method.

For instance, “one day Abdullah bin Amr approached the Messenger of Allah and inquired, Is it considered vanity if I wear nice clothes? The Prophet responded, No, Abdullah followed up by asking, Is it considered vanity if I cook and invite people? Again, the Messenger of Allah replied, No, Perplexed, Abdullah queried, Then what is vanity? The Prophet Muhammad explained, Vanity is underestimating the right and looking down on people.”

In another instance, “a companion asked the Prophet, Whom should I show favor to? The Prophet replied, First to your mother, then to your father. On a different occasion, when people asked the beloved Prophet, Oh, the messenger of Allah, which of the believers is more virtuous? He directed them, saying, The one whom the Muslims are safe from the harms of his/her tongue and his/her hand.”⁷

In addition to answering questions, the Prophet of Islam would occasionally pose questions to his friends and companions spontaneously. This served to maintain their curiosity, inspire them, keep their minds alert, and enhance their learning experiences.

⁷ Sunan an-Nasa'i 4995

➤ **Individual contact Method of Teaching**

The teaching method of individual contact, which involves imparting knowledge or conveying a message to people individually, holds great significance. This method often yields substantial and effective results, especially when trust is established between the message receiver and the messenger. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself recognized the importance of this approach in teaching and spreading the principles of advocacy.

The Prophet (PBUH) initially chose to begin his sacred mission within the confines of his home and then extended it to those who were closely associated with him. He commenced his mission by contacting individuals he believed would embrace the truth revealed by Allah. This initial phase of invitation was carried out secretly due to the staunch adherence of the people of Mecca to the idolatrous religion of their forefathers. Furthermore, they often resorted to violence in resolving disputes.

Given the political, religious, and social climate of Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) strategically invited his closest relatives, friends, and those known for their good character to embrace Islam. These early converts included prominent figures in Islamic history, such as Khadija,⁸ Zaid ibn Harithl, and Abu Bakr. They all accepted the mission of Prophet during the early days of Islam.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that contemporary scholars and preachers should assess the circumstances and mindset of their audience to employ appropriate and effective methods and strategies when calling people to Islam or teaching Islamic beliefs and practices. Just as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) tailored his approach to the specific context of Mecca, today's educators should adapt their teaching methods to the needs and circumstances of their audience, fostering understanding and trust for more successful communication and guidance.

➤ **Writing Method of Teaching**

The method of teaching through writing played a significant role in the preservation and dissemination of the Quran during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah over 23 years ago, delivered in parts through the angel of revelation, Gabriel.

Companions of the Prophet learned these incoming revelations directly from him. They not only memorized the Quranic verses but also integrated them into their daily lives. Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took measures to have the Quranic revelations written down, assigning individuals known as "revelation clerks" or scribes to record the divine messages.

The Prophet (PBUH) would convey the incoming revelations to these revelation clerks, instructing them on where each revelation was to be placed in the Quran and which surah (chapters of the Quran) it would be a part of, along with its specific position within the surah. Furthermore, he encouraged his companions to write down the revelations and make copies of them.

This meticulous process ensured the preservation of the Quran in both oral and written forms. It was safeguarded in the memories of those who had memorized it and on parchment through the act of writing. Notably, Hazrat Umar, one of the prominent companions, embraced Islam after reading a written copy of the Quran. This underscores the significance of teaching through writing as a method employed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself.

⁸ the Prophet's first wife

The Prophet Muhammad's use of writing as a teaching method was crucial in preserving the Quranic revelations for generations to come. It served as a means of ensuring that the divine messages were accurately recorded and accessible to a broader audience, contributing to the enduring legacy of the Quran.

➤ **Teaching through gatherings**

In the context of conveying Allah's message, a specific Quranic verse was revealed, where Allah (S.W.T) instructed the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to "warn your tribe, O Muhammad, of near kindred."⁹ In response to this divine command, the Prophet of Islam gathered the people of his tribe¹⁰ and issued a general warning. He then made specific references to certain tribes, emphasizing the urgency of rescuing themselves from the Fire of Hell.

Addressing the Quraish as a whole, he implored them to safeguard themselves from the impending punishment of Allah. He extended this warning to particular tribes, such as the people of Bani Ka'ab, urging them to take heed and seek salvation. Notably, he even directed his message to his beloved daughter, Fatimah, stating that his power could not protect her from Allah except through maintaining their familial relationship.

This manifestation of the Prophet's mission was a response to the divine command. He actively engaged with the people of Quraish by visiting markets, clubs, and gatherings to proclaim his message. Resoundingly, he called upon them to declare their belief in the oneness of Allah and attain success. This bold declaration signified to the closest people that their acceptance of his message was foundational to any future relationship between him and them. It also signaled a transformation in the Arabian social fabric, as the traditional blood ties on which their society was built now took a backseat to the divine ultimatum.

In essence, the Prophet Muhammad's actions embodied his commitment to fulfilling the command of Allah, actively engaging with his community, and emphasizing the importance of embracing the message of monotheism as the cornerstone of their relationship with him and, more importantly, with Allah.

➤ **Feasts as a Method of Teaching**

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) often used gatherings and feasts as a method to teach and spread Islam. He would invite people for meals, discussions, or specifically to impart knowledge about the religion. These gatherings could be private, depending on the circumstances or specific needs, and could involve individuals or groups, conducted discreetly or openly.

Following Allah's commands, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) convened a gathering of his kinsmen from Bani Hashim along with a group from Bani Al-Muttalib bin Abd Munaf. There were forty-five men in attendance. He arranged for another meeting and secured their audience, where he delivered a concise and compelling speech. In it, he praised Allah, sought His assistance, professed his faith, and bore witness to the oneness of Allah. He emphasized his role as a messenger sent by Allah to both the gathered audience and all of humanity. He solemnly affirmed the reality of death, resurrection, and accountability for one's actions, leading to either eternal Hell or Paradise.

Abu Talib, a key figure in the audience, expressed his love, support, and belief in the Prophet's message. He assured the Prophet of his protection and defense, declaring his willingness to comply with the Prophet's wishes. However, he stated that he could not abandon the religion of Abdul-Muttalib, his

⁹ Surah Ash-Shura: 26:214

¹⁰ Prophet Muhammad belonged to the tribe of Quraish.

forefather. Abu Lahab, on the other hand, urged Abu Talib to restrain the Prophet, considering it a negative development. Despite this, Abu Talib resolutely vowed to shield the Prophet for as long as he lived.¹¹

➤ Teaching According to Nature and Level

Teaching per people's natures and customs was a wise approach consistently employed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He tailored his teachings to match the level of understanding and mental faculties of his audience while imparting his guidance with a spirit of tolerance and ease.¹² Anas bin Malik testified to the Prophet's character, stating that during his ten years of service to the Prophet, he never heard him complain about anyone's actions. The Prophet never spoke harshly or questioned him for his actions.¹³ Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad recognized the diversity of people within society. He understood that there were different types of individuals, including the intellectual elite, the ordinary masses, and those who were stubbornly resistant to his message. To each group, he tailored his speech, calling, and teaching methods accordingly. He engaged with people based on their intelligence and always adapted his words to the specific situation. He spoke in a manner that resonated with each group, using their language and addressing their unique needs.

Allah had bestowed upon the Prophet a commanding and awe-inspiring presence, making him a figure who naturally drew people's attention and respect. However, the Prophet humbly approached those he spoke to, bringing himself down to their level. This humility was evident in his interactions with others. For instance, he would instruct even young children in a gentle and considerate manner, as seen in his guidance to Umar ibn Abu Salamah: "Come near, my son, mention Allah's name, eat with your right hand, and eat what is next to you."¹⁴ This approach endeared him to people from all walks of life and allowed his teachings to reach a wide and diverse audience effectively.

➤ Teaching through Sending Envoys and Delegations

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) employed the method of teaching through envoys, a highly effective approach. He carefully selected envoys based on their knowledge and experience and dispatched them on missions. Prior to his migration to Medina, he dispatched a group of companions to Ethiopia. This not only offered them sanctuary from persecution in Mecca but also provided an opportunity to propagate Islam. Consequently, the Negus, the king of Ethiopia, along with many of his subjects, embraced Islam.¹⁵ The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) entrusted Mus'ab bin Umayr with the task of teaching and spreading Islam in Madinah. His endeavors resulted in a substantial number of Madinans embracing Islam and assisting in the preparations for the Prophet's migration. In the sixth year after Hijrah, the Prophet initiated the sending of messages inviting kings outside Arabia to embrace Islam. Furthermore, Mu'az bin Jabal was delegated to Yemen to instruct and promote Islam, especially among new adherents.¹⁶

Furthermore, another prominent teaching method employed by the Prophet Muhammad was through delegations. He sent delegations to influential and special individuals to acknowledge their status. These delegations, numbering over seventy, included representatives from various tribes and regions, such as the

¹¹ Nighat R. & Mussarat J. 2014

¹² Maliki, 2014

¹³ Sahih al-Bukhari 5691

¹⁴ Sunan Abi Dawud 3777

¹⁵ Al-Seerah al-Nabawiyah, ibn Hisham, p. 245-248

¹⁶ Sunan Abi Dawud 3592

delegations of Abdul Qais, Amr Al-Judhami's messenger, Sudâ delegation, and others. These delegations continued to arrive in Madinah up until the tenth year after the Hijra, demonstrating the widespread acceptance and influence of Islamic teachings. This solidified Madinah as the central hub of Arabia, establishing its prominence and making it unavoidable for those seeking to engage with Islam.¹⁷

➤ Teaching Through Character

One of the profound method of teaching employed by Prophet of Islam was through his character. His silent yet powerful mode of instruction was rooted in his personality, characterized by his honesty, truthfulness, kindness, gentleness, and pure intentions. It was these qualities that contributed significantly to the success of his mission.

In the teaching of Islam, knowledge was undoubtedly important, but equally crucial was how that knowledge was presented and embodied. The Prophet's conduct exemplified the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. This is vividly expressed in the response of Aisha (R) when asked about his behavior. She pointed out that his character and conduct were a living manifestation of the Quranic principles.¹⁸

In essence, the Prophet Muhammad's character served as a living model of the values and principles of Islam. Through his actions, interactions, and way of life, he conveyed the essence of religion to those around him, making his teachings not just words on paper but a living, practical example for others to follow. This silent method of teaching through character left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of his followers, making it one of the most powerful and enduring aspects of his mission.

➤ Gradualism Method of Teaching

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) utilized the method of gradualism in his teachings. Rather than imposing numerous commandments or prohibitions all at once, he introduced them gradually. This approach aimed to prevent overwhelming the people and ensure the receptiveness of his teachings. An illustrative example of this strategy is evident in the mission of Mu'adh ibn Jabal to Yemen. The Prophet provided ample guidance, directing him to implement a step-by-step approach in imparting teachings to the local population.¹⁹

In contemporary times, the importance of qualified teachers and the role of teaching in Islam are often overlooked. When teaching does occur, it is frequently done without a proper understanding of the etiquettes, prerequisites, and general principles outlined in the sacred sources of Islam. Hence, the essence of teaching often falls short of the potential benefits and blessings that could be achieved. In the current era, what is most essential for our contemporary scholars in teaching and inviting people to Islam is the possession of accurate knowledge, gentleness, patience, endurance, and wisdom.

This approach is crucial for dispelling misconceptions and falsehoods propagated against Islam. It requires wisdom, patience, and perseverance, as these respectful methods yield swift results and have a profound impact on the audience. Allah has emphasized the consequences for those who oppose the Messenger's clear guidance and choose a different path.²⁰

¹⁷ Nighat R. & Mussarat J. 2014

¹⁸ Alvi, K. 2000

¹⁹ Sunan Abi Dawud 3592

²⁰ Al-Nisaa 4:115

CONCLUSION

One of the fundamental goals of the Islamic faith is to foster and amplify the innate capacities of human beings, who are born without inherent knowledge and self-awareness. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was designated as the foremost teacher and educator to fulfill this pivotal mission. Despite encountering various challenges, a central aspect of the Prophet's responsibilities was to convey the revelations received from Allah, share knowledge, and educate people. His role extended to guiding individuals to recognize their potential and integrate righteous actions permanently into their lives.

The era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can be rightfully termed the "Golden Age" in Islamic history, as he played a pivotal role in educating and empowering his companions, profoundly impacting their lives through the process of teaching and learning. His approach went beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; he instigated a comprehensive transformation among his followers by demonstrating how to live under the teachings of the Holy Book of Quran.

During the early period of Islam, education was a paramount concern for Muslims. It was a dynamic process that led to transformation and empowerment within the Muslim community. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stood as an exemplary teacher and instructor, employing effective teaching methods and skillful techniques to successfully convey the message of Islam. Through these methods, he managed to unite the previously divided Arab tribes, rife with vengeance, rivalry, and internal conflicts, creating a strong and cohesive nation that has endured from his time to the present day.

The Prophetic methods and techniques of teaching encompassed a wide array of approaches, all aimed at guiding people toward the path of enlightenment and moral excellence. These methods laid the foundations for a virtuous and righteous life in various aspects. As a result, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), recognized as the most influential figure in history by scholars like Michael Hart, left an indelible legacy of effective teaching and education that continues to shape the lives and beliefs of countless individuals to this day.

Unfortunately, within the Ummah, the adherence to the Prophet's teaching methods has diminished. Despite the advancements in science and technology, there's a crucial necessity to uphold and apply the teaching methods and instructions provided by divine Prophets in human societies. This is because while science and technology offer tools and instruments, they do not prevent their potential misuse by individuals.

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