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The Methodology of Religious Education  
in the  
United Arab Emirates

by

**Fatima A. H. AbdulGhani**

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Presented in Candidature for the Degree of  
Master of Art  
in  
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in the  
School of Education  
of the  
**University of Durham**

August, 1993



**10 MAY 1994**

*In the name of Allah,  
the Beneficent, the Merciful*

To my  
home land  
parents  
lovely husband and children  
(Abdalla, Maeen, Yaqean, Afya  
and Abdelaziz)

**DECLARATION**

This thesis is entirely from my own work  
and has not been previously offered in any other degree or diploma.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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As this thesis is on its way to completion, I offer gratitude to my children who suffered most from my engagement in this work. I ask Allah to help me in raising them well. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my beloved husband. Without their support, encouragement and patience this work would never have come to fruition.

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*Falima*  
*Durham, 26 Aug. 1993*

## ABSTRACT

In this thesis Islamic teaching methodology in the UAE has been examined in relation to Islamic ideology, the Qur'an and Muhammad's (pbuh) teaching methods, and in accordance with the social aims in the UAE. The aim of the investigation and the methodology used are outlined in Chapter I.

Chapters II and III consider the nature and process of Islamic education as derived from the Islamic world view. They also try to demonstrate that the content of religious education is derived from the Holy Qur'an; the accepted model of the religious education teacher is derived from the personality and character of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); and that the methods of religious education are derived from, and legitimated by, his practice. Chapter IV attempts to show how the scope and purpose of religious education is derived from the concept of community (*Ummah*) and the Islamic way of life (*Shariah*).

These crucial features of Islam have implications for education and methodology. The Islamic subject teacher is expected to teach for a community larger than the classroom and for a way of life larger than the intellect or schooling. Detailed discussion of the teacher's role is given in Chapter IV, while Islamic teaching methodology in the UAE is examined in Chapter V. Chapter VI discusses the relation between what is seen in the Emirates at the period of study and Islamic ideology and the methodologies of the Qur'an and Muhammad (pbuh). It examines methodologies in accordance with social aims in the UAE. The same chapter explores the conclusions and recommendations harvested from this work.

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# Chapter I

## Methodology as a Focus of Study

### Focus of study

This thesis had its origin in a desire to investigate the methods used in the UAE in religious education. The term 'methods' suggests techniques. At first sight it might seem that the only questions worth asking are: 'What methods are used?' and, 'Are they effective?' (ie do children learn?) The implication of this approach is that a method may be detached from its context and viewed in isolation. On this view it is possible to evaluate a method apart from the content to which it is applied, the personality of the teacher who employs it, or the overall purpose which it serves.

This strictly instrumental view of methodology (ie that it is no more than a study of technique) does violence to the distinctive nature of Islam. For in Islam method cannot be divorced from a whole range of beliefs, values and purposes. It soon becomes apparent that methods are embedded in a complex of other assumptions, convictions and presuppositions.

For example, a method implies asking 'What is the purpose of this learning and what is the purpose of education generally?' Is it to spread general knowledge about Islam or to form a generation of 'true Muslims'? It might be to cast an Islamic veil over a semi-Islamic society or to preserve society's traditions! It is not the purpose of this work to investigate the future of religious teaching in modern society in the UAE. Nevertheless, each of the above mentioned possible aims would have its role to play in the blueprint of the teaching methodology.

Again, teaching is very much tied to content. Usually there are core ideas which form a curriculum and, in fact, often determine which teaching method is chosen for the lesson. In other words, 'what are the determinants of the content to which the method is applied?'

Moreover, if the curriculum is looked upon as the message required to be



communicated to the pupil, then the teacher acts as the messenger. It is not parcelled up, nor is it in a closed package. It is rather an open letter that needs to be read with compassion. Religious education has much more spiritual input than other subjects that might be taught at school. Such a spiritual 'open letter' needs to be presented in an effective informative manner. This cannot occur without having a suitable messenger. So, one may ask, 'what is the model of the teacher who employs the methods?' The influential role of the teacher on the methods employed is a topic that will be comprehensively explored in a later chapter of this thesis.

It is much more difficult to answer the question 'By what criteria may a method be evaluated?' Is it just a matter of whether it is effective or not? Or is it a matter of being accepted by the educational system? A specific inquiry could be: 'Are there moral criteria which exclude some methods?' In the case of non-moral subjects (pure science for instance) for teachers to be able to ensure that pupils retain and recall knowledge may be a sufficient defence of any given method. Furthermore, as it is hard to measure moral behaviour or acts on examination papers, would retaining and recalling be sufficient for class teaching? It is difficult in the UAE to neglect other factors - lessons can never be detached from the society as a whole.

All the above questions suggest that the methodology of religious education in the UAE needs to be contextualised. The methods employed by teachers must be set within the framework of assumptions characteristic of Islam. I intend to demonstrate how Islamic Education is influenced by Islamic characteristics and to show that any method presupposes a theory or has a theory implicit within it, whether this theory is articulated or not. The basis of Islamic education, and therefore the methodology of religious education, lies in Islamic theory. To understand these methods we must consider them in the context of the Islamic view of mankind, his environment and the universe and Man's notions of learning and knowledge. The influence of Islamic concepts on the characteristics of Islamic Education is discussed in some detail in Chapter II.

Two features of Islam are supremely important for the methods which are employed in religious education: the Holy Qur'an and Muhammad's Sunna. The Qur'an, for Muslims, is the most important source of Islamic education and within it is found a complete system of methods and regulations from which Islamic Education is derived. The Sunnah is the second most important source for Islamic Education. Not only does it provide back-up and explanation to the Qur'an, but in it are found many detailed aspects of faith and their practical applications. The methodology entailed by the importance given to both the Qur'an and Muhammad will be examined in Chapter III.

For the Qur'an two questions will be raised and discussed: 'In what way is the Qur'an relevant to the question of methodology?'; and, 'What are the implications of having an authoritative book at the heart of an education system?' Both issues are discussed from the viewpoint of curriculum content, scope and purpose.

If the Qur'an is the 'what' of religious education then Muhammad is the 'who' and 'how'. Four aspects of Muhammad's teaching role will be investigated: the success, focus, style, and essence of his methodology.

The Community of Islam (*Ummah*) and the Way of Life (*Shariah*) together shape the whole existence of Muslims. These two features determine the scope of the educational enterprise and its essential purpose. Consequently, the teacher is expected to teach for a community larger than the classroom and for a way of life larger than the development of the intellect. This implies a comprehensive role for the teacher. The question: 'What are the implications of teaching for *ummah* and *shariah*, and what are the functions of the teacher who embraces this mission?' are discussed in Chapter IV with reference to the communities of the UAE.

In brief, this thesis focuses on the implications for the nature and processes of education in the UAE of the Islamic world view. In addition, it will explore four further areas:

- the way in which the content of religious education is derived from the Holy

Qur'an;

- the way in which the model of the religious education teacher is derived from the personality and character of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh);
- the way in which the methods of religious education are derived from, and legitimated by, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad; and
- the way in which the scope and purpose of religious education derived from the concept of community (*ummah*) and the Islamic way of life (*shariah*).

The first four chapters thus supply the necessary Islamic context within which the investigation of methodology is conducted.

### **Research methodology**

In order to gather relevant material, two visits to the UAE were undertaken for a total of four months fieldwork. Data collection involved all schooling levels in the UAE with greater emphasis on primary schools because I believed that this age group was easier to educate.

### **Collection of data**

Three types of methodologies were employed: personal interviews, collection of published curricular material, and direct observation.

#### **i. Personal Interviews**

Many educators were interviewed - academics, headteachers, supervisors, schoolteachers and university teachers. Some of those interviewed spoke about the theory rather than the reality of classroom life, but some of them did show a real awareness of what was happening in the classroom in the UAE.

Those interviewed included: Mr.E.Naky, the head of supervisors for all subjects taught in the UAE. He spoke to me about how student-teachers in the UAE are trained, and what criteria the Ministry of Education thought a "good" teacher should meet.

I discussed the special methods of teaching which the Ministry of Education advised teachers to use and the kind of teachers they were looking for. I spoke with the Head Supervisor of Islamic Education about the methods of nurture used in schools in the UAE, and the work and activities outside the classroom. I asked him if he used the same methods used by Muhammad, and if modern methods were applied. He also elaborated about the type of teachers he preferred, or did not prefer.

I also interviewed Mr. Y. Al-Najjar - Management Supervisor of the Eastern District. We discussed the same topics as these discussed with Mr. Naky and he gave some examples of the methods of teaching recommended by school supervisors in the Eastern District. He assisted me in meeting the following five supervisors: Mr. M. Rakwah, Mrs. A. El-Merza, Mr. A. Ahmed, Mrs. F. Abdul-Baky, and Mrs. H. Abdul-Bary. I spoke with all of them about methodology and a great deal of information was collected. The meeting was of great benefit to me because those interviewed had a wealth of experience in the field of the research. The discussion about the problems they encountered was most useful, and they supplied the names of teachers to visit in various schools. I met four headteachers: M. Al-Johary, T. Al-Hosany, M. Shahen, and Z. Al-Najjar. All of them talked about their observations when visiting classrooms in their schools.

ii. Collection of Curricular Material

All Islamic education Teachers' Guides (9) and student books (12) were reviewed in addition to which the few available written notices about methodology which the supervisors give teachers and the most useful periodical - '*Al-Tarbiah*' - published by the Ministry of Education were also reviewed.

iii. Direct Observations

I sought permission to enter classrooms. This is not normally allowed as this is the domain of the supervisors and headteachers. I visited 15 classes with different teachers and met another 15 teachers (ie. a total of thirty teachers). Notes were taken from all these meetings whether from directly observed methods or model lessons

performed by some experienced teachers.

The ages of the pupils were between 4 to 14, although pupils aged between 15 to 18 were also visited despite the fact that they were out of the field of study. This was good for checking the progress of the students in Islamic education classrooms as most of the students I met in the later classes had previously been taught by the teachers I had met, and thus, so to speak, I could see the 'final product'.

I found this experience very enjoyable and did not encounter any problems in understanding the teachers' work - maybe because I myself had been a teacher for five years and had taught a variety of age groups and worked in the summer Quranic schools for six years. However, it was clear that sometimes what I was told was put in propagandistic form and differed markedly from what was going on in the field. This qualification also applied to what was written in the Teachers' Guides. It was clear, likewise, that some supervisors knew little of what was available and achievable in the field.



## Chapter II

### The Islamic World View and the Concept of Education

#### Introduction

Islamic methods of educational nurture are only a part of the whole, comprehensive system of Islam and as such cannot be considered in isolation or divorced from the fundamental principles of Islam. To understand these methods we must consider them in the context of the Islamic view of mankind, his environment and the universe and Man's notions of learning and knowledge. However it is not an aim of this chapter to discuss these aspects in great detail but related points are to be discussed to support further findings in this research.

#### The Characteristic Concepts of Islam

In order to appreciate these all-encompassing viewpoints, we must briefly discuss the characteristic concepts of Islam:

##### 1. The Rabbani Nature of the Principles of Islam

[*Rabbani*; That which is Divine; that which is of, or comes from God.]

The Qur'an embodies the main concepts or principles of Islam with all their attendant characteristics, directly and exclusively revealed by God. It is considered an undistorted revelation and may not be changed. Muslims adopted these principles, adjusted to their concepts and worked within them. Whilst the principles of Islam are unchanging in nature, within their framework Man has freedom to progress and develop. He has no need to venture outside the framework. It is deemed to be a perfect fit, since He who has created mankind, also created the framework:

*'The one who created the concepts of Islam also created mankind and therefore the two are ideal for each other'.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Qutb, S., *Characteristic concepts of Islam*, Al-Etehad Al-Islami Al-'alami Lil-Monaddmat Al-Tulabyah, 1983, p.66.

## 2. The Unchangeable Nature of the Principles of Islam

Everything within the universe is in motion: Man, the earth, the stars, even the universe itself. However, this motion is limited. Everything moves according to the laws set down by God, confined to their paths or orbits by Him, and if any one entity moves outside these laws, the ensuing imbalance causes a major disruption. The heavenly bodies - planets, etc., revolve around their own axes, and so it is with mankind who also needs a motionless axis around which to move. For, if Man is not governed by laws, the ensuing imbalance, as with a planet out of orbit in the solar system, causes a major disruption and the result is anarchy. The principles of Islam are the stationary axis around which the life of mankind can rotate; the magnetic force which pulls Man back within an ordered and well- defined orbit.

## 3. The Comprehensive and Integral Nature of the Principles of Islam

The universe, and everything within it - Man, the stars and the systems we live by are all separate entities and, simultaneously, are an integral part of the whole of creation. Each is dependent to some degree on the others. Thus, as the whole of creation is interdependent, so too, the principles of Islam are interwoven, all-encompassing, and comprehensive in nature. They cover the whole of human experience and in doing so create a perfect order and balance between each different aspect of existence.

## 4. The Universal Nature of the Concepts of Islam

Islam is not a religion which is meant to be unique to the Arab race. On the contrary it is intended to be a message for the whole of the world. Nor in Islam is it said that any one people be the 'chosen' people, nor one person the only son of God. There is no partiality, all are considered to be equal.

So far, we have discussed the concepts of Islam; the practice must follow: The concepts of Islam, which we have discussed are theoretical. Without putting them into practice they have no true substance - our views, perceptions, and ideas are like lifeless models, but when we put them into practice, then we have indeed achieved something good. It is because of the above that Islam is not just a theory or corpus of ideological theological discussion but also a practical method of nurture and self-development. This is perhaps an appropriate time to examine the Islamic view of Man and the society in which he lives.

### **The Characteristics of Islamic Education**

#### **1. The Rabbani Nature of Islamic Education**

It is believed, if we could see inside the *fitrah*, or true nature of Man, we would discover within, the qualities of *Rabbani*, or that which is divine. There is an element within Man which says there is something larger than himself, more powerful than the universe. Man feels as if he is in the control of this power, the power which created this world with all its beauty and goodness and movement, and when Man contemplates his world, he recognises that nothing happens without someone or something causing it, e.g. the passing of day or night, life and death, the existence of animals and plants.

Islamic education tries to help humans to understand all these things within the concept of *Rabbani*. It educates people to know the names, or attributes, of Allah and to feel and comprehend these names, or attributes. This approach treats the whole of the universe as one large classroom with the entire creation as its reference material.

Islamic education has, as its starting point, the awakening of the human intellect. Within it are contained many methods which address all age groups - from childhood and adolescence through to adult status and old age - and whichever is most

appropriate can be selected for the given circumstances.

One major aim of Islamic education is to create an awareness of the divine presence, 'consciousness of God'; a belief in God and the *Rabbani*, or God-given concept of Islamic nurture, has numerous benefits. It teaches mankind a great respect for law and order because Islamic nurture teaches us that Allah can see us and is watching us at all times, and the laws contained in the Qur'an are God-given and therefore must be obeyed by Muslims, i.e. it instills a realisation of the omnipotence and omniscience of God. So Man learns to love God and at the same time to fear God. Man lives with the awareness of the fact that on the Last Day he will be judged by God and it is this aspect of Islamic nurture which places the believing Muslim on an elevated spiritual plane. It also encourages the development of the conscience and educates Man to carry out his duties with purity of faith and honesty.

The first result of the *Rabbani* facet of Islamic nurture is that it teaches Muslims that, after obedience to God, they should respect and obey the *Wali Al-'ammr*, or the person who is higher in authority and has the responsibility of the care of others (e.g. parent of children, governor of an area, or the leader of a Muslim state). This respect of *the Wali Al-'ammr* is higher if that head is a practising Muslim.

The second result is the belief in *Tawheed* - the belief in the oneness of God - and from this stems the unity of all Muslim people of the earth under one faith. The *Tawheed*, when present in Man's feelings, in his behaviour, his desires, thoughts, and in his work, is a very powerful force and could enable the Muslim people to build one of the strongest societies seen by Man.

The third result of the divine nature of Islamic education or nurture is that it gives the mind and the heart an unparalleled freedom within the boundaries set by God. The human being does not easily accept anything without proof and there is no necessity for the Islamic intellect to accept anything which is obviously wrong or illogical - hence the freedom to question, subject to God's revelation.

## 2. The Unchangeable Nature of Islamic Education

Islamic education takes its structure, aims and methods directly from the Word of God and from the laws contained therein. As we have stated previously the principles of Islam are unchanging in nature, but as the times and conditions change, the application of them may change to suit these developments. Therefore, it follows that whilst the principles behind the aims, curricula and methods of Islamic nurture are also unchanging, they themselves are adaptable to fit new circumstances. The basic method used to teach religious education is the application of the principles of Islam within the circumstances relevant to the class. Therefore whilst to some extent Islamic education remains the same for all ages, yet for each generation it is always new and never becomes obsolete. As we have already said, God created Man and knows all there is to know of him, and therefore Islamic nurture, which is from God, is completely suitable for Man - for every place and for every time.

*'Should He not know, He that created? And He is the one that understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted with them'.<sup>2</sup>*

Allah (swt) created the soul with a feeling of responsibility and therefore, the soul seeks knowledge of God, and prays to God and worships him:

*'So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith: [Establish] God's handiwork according to the pattern on which he has made mankind: No change [let there be] In the work [wrought] by God: that is the standard Religion. But most among mankind understand not.'<sup>3</sup>*

Islamic education is built on the collective disciplines of aims, curriculum and methods, all these come from the Islamic *Shariah*. So, through all ages and times, Islamic nurture has been capable of teaching the inner soul of mankind to develop a good and strong person and also a happy one. This characteristic has enabled Islam to survive crises and disasters in its history.

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<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an, 67:14.

<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an, 30:30.

*"When Islamic nurture takes its place within the hearts of people, these people see its aims very clearly, and they will automatically start to respond to the demands of Islamic nurture, thereby reaching those said goals. A mere taste of the benefits of Islamic nurture will ensure that these people will never reject it".<sup>4</sup>*

### 3. The Comprehensive Nature of Islamic Education

Islamic nurture is comprehensive, reaching every corner of life and is also well balanced. Islamic education teaches people to think and use their God-given intellect, not to accept without question. In what way does this method of nurture teach them to think? It constantly asks the people to look around them; at the sky, the mountains, the stars, and so on, and thereby gives rise to the inevitable question, 'who created all of this?' Islamic nurture teaches the people to use and apply all the resources of this world and to study and research its many wonders and natural phenomena. The elements of *Rabbani* which stimulate Man to be true to himself and his faith and the questioning of the elements of the world provide a balance between the inner and external elements of Man's existence. Thus is the *fitrah* and fulfillment of Man's needs achieved in Islam.

These needs, from the Islamic point of view, can be summarised by;

1. The need to believe. Many philosophers have discussed Man's intellectual need to believe.

*'There are many questions that people ask themselves like: "where do I come?", "where am I going?", and "why am I here?" To all of these questions there are no viable answers to be found except through a religious belief, and throughout history the answers have always been provided through the revealed religions'.<sup>5</sup>*

One element of Islamic education is to examine such questions with

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<sup>4</sup> Nahlawi, A., '*Al-Tarbia El-Islamiyya wal Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and new Problems)*', Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, pp.84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Aqqad, A.M., '*Al-Insan fil-Qur'an (Humans' in the Qur'an)*', Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1969, p.9.

reference to the teachings of Islam.

2. Man needs to fulfil his material desires and natural needs, such as his love of wealth and his need to eat, to drink and to have sexual relations. In Islam Man is never called upon to suppress or deny these basic needs but it is stressed that it is essential they are channelled into worthy directions. Islamic education teaches people how to direct their desires and needs along a righteous path, and what is more, by following the simple rule of life suggested by Islam, they will not only reap the benefits in this life but also those of the life to come.

Islamic education teaches a fine balance between love of God and fear of God.

Because of this we find that the Qur'an speaks about both aspects in one verse;

*"Say: 'O men! I am [Sent] to you only to give A clear warning: Those who believe and work Righteousness, for them Is forgiveness and a sustenance Most generous."*<sup>6</sup>

Islamic education also produces the same sensitive balance between the mind and the heart. So, due to this delicately established balance of all the extremes of feeling found in this life, Islamic education comes to fruition. A good analogy to appreciate this is that of electricity. In order for there to be light, movement or power both negative and positive impulses are required. Negative and negative will produce nothing and positive and positive will also fail to achieve electricity.

Islamic education also defines a balance between work and belief:

*'O ye who believe! Why say ye that Which ye do not? Grievously odious is it In the sight of God That ye say that Which ye do not.'*<sup>7</sup>

This balance between good deeds and belief is extremely important to Muslims as Islam does not require people to live and work as machines without belief. For without belief Man has no aims in life and he has no knowledge of his place in this

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<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an: 15:49,50.

<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an, 61:2,3.

world, but with a firm belief Man is elevated to another plane, and knows why he performs good deeds and believes in the Day of Judgement, when God will ask him what he has done in this life. Likewise belief without good deeds produces an inertia and disability in mankind and the belief itself will be incomplete, for true belief instills a love of honourable, charitable work in Man.

Islamic nurture also forms a balance between the needs of the group and the needs of the individual. Firstly, the needs of the individual are self-evident in that each soul is individually responsible for its own actions before God:

*'Verily the Day of Sorting Out is the time Appointed for all of them, The Day when no protector Can avail his client In aught, and no help Can they receive'.<sup>8</sup>*

Also, the Prophet (pbuh) told his daughter that whilst she might do whatever she wished, the fact that she was his daughter would not absolve her from punishment for any wrong deeds. Everyone was responsible, and must be accountable, for their own actions. From where does this sense of responsibility come? God gave human beings freedom of action and thought and freedom of choice between good and evil. He set rewards for good deeds and punishment for evil ones, and from this state of affairs comes the individual's sense of responsibility. God created each individual with his or her own special talents or gifts and these are capable of being used for either good or evil. The individual must make the choice.

Secondly, the needs of the group are catered for, in that Islam demands that society is regulated and controlled:

*'And say: "Work [righteousness]: Soon will God observe your work, And His Apostle, and the Believers: Soon will ye be brought back To the Knower of what is Hidden and what is open: Then will he show you The truth of all that ye did."<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an, 44:40,41.

<sup>9</sup> The Qur'an, 9:105.



So Islam brought to society laws to regulate and control Man's actions, and to facilitate the enjoyment of what is good and to forbid that which is evil. It is the duty of educators to teach these things to others:

*'Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good. Enjoying what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity'.<sup>10</sup>*

Islam brought a form of worship that, while strengthening and building the individual character, also has a strong communal element. For instance, whilst acts of worship are collective, the responsibility for fulfilling the obligation to worship rests entirely and only with the individual:

*'And be steadfast in prayer, practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down [in worship]'.<sup>11</sup>*

*'And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men, they will come to thee on foot and [mounted] on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways'.<sup>12</sup>*

*'O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may [learn] self-restraint'.<sup>13</sup>*

Thus, Islam inspires within the individual a conscience that will encourage the development of self-discipline and self-correction and at the same time creates an atmosphere of the enjoyment of goodness, and willingness to abide by its laws within society as a whole. Islam thereby creates a perfect balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of the society.

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<sup>10</sup> The Qur'an, 3:104.

<sup>11</sup> The Qur'an, 2:43.

<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an, 27:27.

<sup>13</sup> The Qur'an, 2:183.

#### 4. The Universal Nature of Islamic Education

When we discussed the characteristic concepts of Islam we said that one of these characteristics was the universal nature of Islam. Islam was never meant for the exclusive use of one nation or race and as such Islamic education nurtures within the individual a feeling of entire equality and brotherhood with the rest of mankind. This equality is evident to the extent that Islamic nurture inspires feelings of complete compatibility and friendship between Muslims and builds a brotherhood between people of entirely different countries and cultures which rivals and casts into shade the claims of blood relations. The best example of this was in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) himself. A *surah* was revealed condemning his uncle Abu-Lahab and Abu-Lahab's wife for persecuting the Prophet. This persecution was severe and changed the feelings of the Prophet (pbuh) towards that uncle:

*'Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! perish he!. No profit to him from all his wealth and all his gains!. Burnt soon will he be in a fire of blazing flame!. His wife shall carry the [crackling] wood - as fuel!. A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her [own] neck!'*<sup>14</sup>

At the same time the Prophet's relationship with a new Muslim, who was not even an Arab, was very cordial; '*Salman is one of us*' (meaning one of Muhammad's family).

The universal aspects of Islamic nurture do not only relate to the social relationships between men but also to Man's relationship with the animal kingdom, with plant life and even with the inanimate materials of this world. Examples of this aspect may be found in the next chapter.

Islam provides other reasons for Man's ability to empathize with his surroundings. Above all is the oneness of the Creator, for He created both Man and his environment, and following from this is the *Rabbani* nature of the curriculum, i.e. that which comes from God. Such curriculum in Islamic education or nurture also

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<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an, 111:1-5.

covers all things in this life. It is comprehensive in nature and looks after each aspect of Man's nature with equal emphasis. Emotional, physical and practical aspects are all contained within a working reality. It is not just a theory but a practical, applicable curriculum.

For all these reasons, Islamic education can be seen as part of the whole, an element which is derived from the source; and as such has the same characteristics, values and descriptions as the whole. Abdul-Rahman Nahlawi said:

*"Islamic nurture or education is Rabbani in nature; Islamic nurture has an unchanging, stationary axis, and is entirely suitable to the fitrah, or inherent and true nature of Man; Islamic nurture covers every aspect of Human life and forms a perfect balance; Islamic nurture is an international principle; Islamic nurture is practicable and looks after not only the single person but the group as a whole. It is in fact the most noble form of education in the world".<sup>15</sup>*

### **Implications of the characteristic concepts of Islam on Man, Society, and Education**

Having briefly discussed characteristic aspects of Islam and their bearing upon Islamic education, I think that further illustration is needed to clarify their influence on the methodologies used. If we look at education as, basically, the transfer of knowledge, as a means of change, then Man is the actor and society is the theatre or field where change will occur. These three domains that control methodology, viz Man, Society and Knowledge, as has been said in the introductory section, are to be enhanced in disciplined paths as required. During my fieldwork in the UAE I found there were two major teaching methodologies currently lacking in teaching: freedom of expression and activity-based learning. How does the concept of freedom in Islam affect teaching methods in Islamic Religious Education, or indeed any subject? I will now give a theoretical background to help in assessing further conclusions by

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<sup>15</sup> Nahlawi, A., '*Al-Tarbia El-Islamiyya wal-Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and New Problems)*', Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, p.81.

demonstrating the direct link which I believe exists between individual freedom and Islamic nurturing as practised in early Islamic times and, also, activity-based learning and traditional Islamic teaching methods derived from the origins of Islam.

a. The Concepts of Islam and the Nature of Man

Islam's perception of reality is derived first and foremost from the doctrines in the Qur'an about the nature of the universe <sup>16</sup>:

1. *'The universe is a manifestation of God's Will: it does not stand in opposition to Him as an independent reality. Space, time and matter are interpretations which thought puts on the free creative energy of God. They are not independent realities existing per se but only intellectual modes of apprehending the life of God'.<sup>17</sup>*

2. The universe is designed to obey a certain order and a purpose:

*'Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding who, standing and sitting and reclining, bear God in mind and reflect on the creation of the Heavens and the earth: and say "Oh, our Lord, Thou has not created this in vain".'<sup>18</sup>*

According to the Qur'an, the place of Man in this deliberately-designed creation is highly significant. Man has a twofold nature: the physical and the spiritual, both in one. The nature of the 'ideal' human being in Islam has been summarised by Iqbal in the following points:

1. That Man is the chosen of God;
2. That Man, with all his faults, is meant to be the representative of God on earth:

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<sup>16</sup> Saqib, G.N. *'Modernization of Muslim Education'*, Islamic Book Services, Lahore, 1983, p.41.

<sup>17</sup> Iqbal, M., *'The Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam'*, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1958, p.62.

<sup>18</sup> The Qur'an, 3:188.

*'And it is He who made you His representative of the earth, ..'*<sup>19</sup>

3. That Man is the trustee of divine trust - a free personality and individuality, with all the perils involved:

*'Verily, We offered to the heavens and the Earth, and to the mountains to receive the "trust", but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man undertook to bear it, But hath proved aggressive and ignorant.'*<sup>20</sup>

4. That, with the acceptance of Divine Trust, Man received from God the knowledge of things and was fitted for his sojourn on the earth.<sup>21</sup>

5. That to have spiritual proximity with God, Man must sublimate his nature to God and carry out the responsibilities of the Divine Trust, by way of knowledge and piety - all in submission, in the last analysis, to the Divine Will (Islam).

In this life on earth Man took upon himself the trust of God, with its concomitant gifts of free will and creativity. The burden of this trust enjoins Man to invoke universal justice, to enjoin common good and forbid evil. Man is 'on trial' in this life to fulfil the conditions of this trust. Thus by the very onus of his free-choice and individuality, Man is constantly in search of the Reality - *Tawheed* - of which he is a part and from which he has been alienated. 'Maarfa' (quest for knowledge) and 'ibada' (prayer) are the responses of his 'fitrah' (nature) to the challenge of his tenure on earth. Iqbal asserts that

*'Prayer is an expression of Man's yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe.'*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Qur'an, 6:165.

<sup>20</sup> The Qur'an, 33:72.

<sup>21</sup> The Qur'an, 2:31, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Iqbal, Sir Muhammad, *'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam'*, Oxford University Press, 1934. pp.85-6.

Of primary importance in all this is the human being himself, and this is due to his position as *khalifa* or vicegerent in this world. The Islamic methods of nurture have taught Man how to build this world and his surrounding environment and have educated Man as to how to live peacefully and successfully within his world. Man has a place within the framework of Creation, and whilst his status is high within the hierarchy of that framework, he is, nevertheless, a part fitting in with other parts - animals, plants, etc. Thus the concepts of Islam allow Man to feel empathy with the whole of the universe.

If we return to the basic principles of Islam we find that the Islamic view of mankind is based upon a foundation of respect and freedom for all things. These two characteristics run parallel with the concept of service and worship of Allah. Being a servant of Allah in no way negates the concept of personal freedom since it actually frees Man from the practice of serving other idols, human beings or material objects that might take control on his life. There are many examples of freedom of belief in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the time of the Caliphates.

*'Once an Ansar who had been a Christian converted to Islam. He had two adult sons and asked the Prophet (pbuh) to convert them also. The Prophet refused and ordered the father to let them go free and worship as they wished. Even though the Ansar wept and begged the Prophet to save them from the punishment of hell fire and the hereafter'<sup>23</sup>*

From this example we can see that in Islam the concept of freedom leaves no room for emotional pressure or force on others:

*'So even if the owner of this freedom has no wish to know about Islam and receives no guidance from Allah he will not therefore enter into Islam. So, logically from this we can conclude that he should not be forced into Islam ...'<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> At-Tabari, *'Tafseir Jama' Al-Bayan 'an ta'wil Aya Al-Qur'an (Implications of the Qur'anic Verses)'*, vol. 5, Dar Al-Ma'aref, Egypt, p.410.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Sabouni, M.A., *'Saffwat At-Tafasir (The Prime of the [Qur'anic] Explanations)'*, vol. 1, Dar al-Qur'an Al-Karim, Beirut, 1982, p.163.

Freedom, however, must be coupled with responsibility, and must be used for good rather than evil otherwise anarchy threatens. The Islamic concept of freedom, therefore, embodies the responsibility to make morally correct decisions and whilst the Muslim looks to the Qur'an for guidance, he need not look to it to control his actions:

*'Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish, Thou art not one to manage [men's] affairs.'*<sup>25</sup>

So, here we see that freedom is the ability to choose between what is right and what is wrong. To appreciate it at its best, it must be with the loving support and guidance of the good parent or teacher, ie within a good environment. Thus, of course, applied to Islamic education, points the way to free expression for the students in class within a framework which also includes guidance and encouragement to assume responsibility.

The above embodies basic concepts of Islam which it is important to teach. Thus if Islamic education is to follow the precepts of Islam, freedom to choose as well as guidance must be present; respect for others' beliefs must also be part of the syllabus. As stressed previously, freedom must be accompanied by responsibility and thus the exploration of religious freedom and choices in this must be dealt with very responsibly by the teacher. The age at which students are able to make such choices responsibly must be a factor to be taken into account.

#### b. The Concepts of Islam and the View of Society

In adherence to its central concept, viz the unity of Reality (*Tawheed*), Islam upholds the basic unity of mankind as one community in the essential common bond of its humanity and spirituality. "*Men were created but one community; then they*

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<sup>25</sup> The Qur'an, 88:21,22.

differed", declares the Qur'an<sup>26</sup>. Al Ghazali, deducing the purpose of society from the Qur'an, has maintained:

*'... human society arises inevitably as a result of the individual's inability to live alone. That its coming into existence is necessary reveals God's wisdom, both in creating such needs in human beings on the one hand, and in making individuals incapable of satisfying them alone on the other. God has, in order to make the existence of society inevitable, also created in each individual an inescapable desire for human companionship. In other words, in fashioning human nature in the manner He did, God has made human society a necessity.'*<sup>27</sup>

The Islamic concept of society is '*Ummah*' which does not connote a racial, geographical or kinship unit; *Ummah* is an ideological community - 'a brotherhood in the faith'. Belief in one God, therefore, forms the essential core and the axiological basis for Islamic society. Ideally the main goal of Islamic society has always been the implementation of the norms of Islam as codified in the *Shariah* for the welfare of the *Ummah*. *Shariah* is the collective code of the laws of Islam as derived from the Qur'an, the Prophetic Traditions and the consensus of the *Ummah* and vouchsafed by the learned *Ulama* who are the scholars and custodians of the faith. The *Shariah* forms the main societal norm of Islam and encompasses laws concerning all the political, social, economic, socio-economic, cultural and religio-moral aspects of the *Ummah*.

Such high goals as outlined above, definitely require new approaches toward religious education. The methodologies used in the current form of religious education in the UAE, could develop a twofold nature - traditional teaching methods and innovative ones. Innovative teaching methods include free expression and activity-based learning; for instance, plays, which are the perfect medium to encourage the above freedoms and to demonstrate to the students that with freedom must come a

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<sup>26</sup> The Qur'an, 10:20.

<sup>27</sup> quoted in, Othman, A.I., '*The Concept of Man in Islam in the Writings of Al-Ghazali*', Dar al Maaraf, Cairo, 1960, p.168.



sense of responsibility. A formal lesson situation cannot adequately teach students 'by experience' the nature of freedom. It must, to some extent, be lived through for it to be appreciated and, of course, this involves activities such as plays, simulation, etc., coupled with freedom to discuss the concepts openly and without criticism so that the students can formulate the concepts for themselves. In Islamic education it is Allah (swt) himself who controls and orders the freedom given to Man. This freedom is circumscribed by God's will. There are situations outside the control of Man where he cannot judge or choose, ie the time of his death, the status of the family into which he is born, illness, natural disasters, etc. Thus Man (and the student in Islamic education) must be brought to acknowledge that some things are outside of his control, upon which he cannot exercise any choice because a greater power is in control. Again, the lesson must explore freedom within the limits circumscribed by Islam, and freedom of expression in class must be controlled to the extent that the teacher is still in command, ie freedom within set limits.

Islamic nurturing should educate and channel the enthusiasm and abilities of the learner into developing respect for order within the timescale set out by Islam:

*'Islamic nurturing educates and forms the conscience of the individual and encourages him to like order in his life. His feelings automatically rebel against disorder and his love of neatness and tidiness within his life are uppermost.'*<sup>28</sup>

Training students in a respect for the ordering of time can be achieved through classes dealing with the acts of worship which are at specific times, eg the five prayers, the months of fasting, of pilgrimage, etc.

Thus the exploration of freedom in Islamic education is inextricably linked to other basic characteristics of Islam - love of order, respect, responsibility, seeking

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<sup>28</sup> Nahlawi, A., *'Al-Tarbia El-Islamiyya wal Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and New Problems)'*, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, p.157.

guidance from Allah and the Qur'an. *Rabbani* - that which is divine, is of, or comes from God, must always be present in the classroom. It could be argued that freedom of expression, activity-based learning and the use of technology in the classroom are all 'modern' methods and that their use stems from a desire for change, but I hope I have demonstrated that they fit well within the traditional concepts and examples contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. Changing methods are not contradictory to the unchangeable nature of the principles of Islam.

### c. The Concepts of Islam and the View of Knowledge and Truth

In Islam knowledge is represented in the term '*ilm*' although numerous other words such as '*ma'rafa*' are also used for the concept. '*ilm*', however has a wider meaning than the other words whose meanings denote, for example, activities of reflection and perception and the like, whereas the term '*ilm*' is more comprehensive.

Knowledge has always been highly esteemed in Islam. In fact, the whole purpose of Divine revelation and 'sending down' Prophets has been explained in the Qur'an as for the purpose of communication of knowledge.

*"The Prophets reciting unto people God's revelation: causes them to grow and imparts them knowledge and wisdom"<sup>29</sup>*

There are a many of verses of the Qur'an bidding Man to observe the phenomena of nature, the alternation of day and night, the mysteries of birth and death, growth and decay, the rise and fall of nations etc., and to discover from them the nature of things and their causes.<sup>30</sup>

The most comprehensive exposition of the nature of knowledge in Islam was set out by Al Ghazali in his 'Book of Knowledge', which has been regarded as the

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<sup>29</sup> The Qur'an, 3:164.

<sup>30</sup> Iqbal, Sir Muhammad, '*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*', Oxford University Press, 1934. pp.12-13.

blueprint of Muslim education. Al Ghazali proposed a scheme of the nature of knowledge and the process of its acquisition in Islam. The fundamental thesis of Al Ghazali's book was the unity of knowledge which corroborates the concept of monotheism (*Tawheed*) in Islam. Al Ghazali's topology of knowledge had implicit within it the notion that the essential knowledge that leads to bliss (*saadah*) is all there in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Human effort was to be directed solely to the understanding and acquisition of that knowledge. In other words, knowledge and reality are permanent, and the only changeable aspects are their understanding and re-statement. It was natural therefore, that attention was concentrated on the religious sciences as these were considered to be the short-cut to *saadah* and intellectual sciences remained only as an appendage to the former. [Summarised from Saqib <sup>31</sup>]

Al-Ghazali further postulated that, in Islam, in all the individual aspects of Man's life, Man was a seeker after knowledge - "Man as a knower" asserts Al Ghazali,

*'...is at the same time Man as a being; and both aspects are an indissoluble whole. At any stage in his development, the individual's depth of insight and the degree in which he understands corresponds to a state of being within his total personality. What are known as "instruments of knowledge" including the mind, are not independent of the whole personality, and cannot be detached from other constituents of the personality as the 'faculties of knowledge' or the normal things that count in establishing contact with reality. Every aspect of the personality besides these "faculties", personal goals and interests, etc. are all involved in the process of knowledge.'*<sup>32</sup>

Thus within the Islamic view of mankind is contained Man - the seeker after knowledge.

We can say that knowledge and the seeking of knowledge are starting points

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<sup>31</sup> Saqib, S.N., '*Modernization of Muslim Education*', Islamic Book Services, Lahore, 1983, p.44-47.

<sup>32</sup> Othman, A.I., '*The Conception of Man in Islam in the Writings of Al-Ghazali*', Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, 1960, p.47.

of education in Islam because belief, work, cultivation of our environment, and the position of *khalifa* would all be impossible without existing knowledge or without seeking to improve that knowledge. Therefore we can see that Islam places a great emphasis on knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge to such a great extent that the first verse revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), was;

*"Proclaim! [or Read!] In the name Of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created. Created Man, out of a [mere] clot Of congealed blood. Proclaim! ... thy Lord Is most bountiful; He who taught [The use of] the Pen. Taught Man that which he knew not".<sup>33</sup>*

Reading is therefore the key to knowledge and learning and the Pen is one of the instruments of knowledge.

The Qur'an has many verses which indicate that the acquisition of knowledge is not only a good thing but is virtually an obligation for Muslims. The evidence contained in the Qur'an for this is extensive and varied. Allah (swt) says in the glorious Qur'an.

*'Nor should the Believers All go forth together: If a contingent From every expedition Remained behind, They could devote themselves To studies in religion, And admonish the people When they return to them, That thus they [may learn] To guard themselves [against evil]'<sup>34</sup>*

An illustration of the indications of these verses is given by Rashid Rada in his book 'Tafseer Al-Qur'an Al Hakim'; 'The explanation of this verse according to Ibn Abbas is that the Muslims are divided into groups, some to perform Jihad (or fighting in the way of Allah) and some to stay with the Prophet (pbuh) in order to learn. This group is then obliged to teach whatever they learnt from the Prophet (pbuh) to the group

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<sup>33</sup> The Qur'an, 113:1-5.

<sup>34</sup> The Qur'an, 9:122.

returning from Jihad'.<sup>35</sup>

Various other verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet give great importance to learning and the diffusion of knowledge. e.g.

*'God will raise in rank those of you who believe as well as those who are giving knowledge'*<sup>36</sup>

*'Go to your family and teach them'*<sup>37</sup>

*'Learn my words by heart and teach them to all the people you meet'*<sup>38</sup>

True Islam invoked rationality and castigated 'taqlid' (traditionalism).

The Qur'an repeatedly exhorts its adherents to observe, to reflect, to think, to ponder, to reason and to learn from the natural phenomena whose nature is to change and alternate.

*'The creation of heaven and earth, of night and day, the vessels that cross the seas for the use of men, the fall of rain which brings life to a dead earth; the animation of the creatures, the orientation of the winds and subjection of the clouds between heaven and earth - all are signs for those who reason.'*<sup>39</sup>

The clearest exhortation to Man to keep pace with the change comes in the verse:

*'God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves.'*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Reda, R., *'Tafseir Al-Qur'an Al-Hakim (Implications of the Qur'an)'*, Maktabat Al-Man, Egypt, (no year), p.11.

<sup>36</sup> The Qur'an, 58:2.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Bukhari, *'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari'*, trans. Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol.I, Kazi publications, 1983, p.71.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> The Qur'an, 2:164.

<sup>40</sup>The Qur'an, 13:11.

In a similar manner, the Qur'an while underlining the nature of conflict between his fellow Meccans and Prophet Muhammad, states: The Meccans said, '*We found our fathers following a certain course and we shall follow in their footsteps*'. What said the Prophet, '*Will you still persist even if I bring you a clearer guidance than your fathers had left for you?*' 'So,' affirms the Qur'an, '*We punished them.*' Similar exhortations, even admonishments for not developing critical faculties and for not questioning traditionalism, abound in the Qur'an.

Finally, Islamic nurture is positive in nature in that it channels all Man's needs and desires into a satisfying and productive direction. This positive aspect is also present in Islam in that the belief in this world and the hereafter gives an optimistic outlook to the Muslim. What is sown or cultivated in this world will be harvested in the life to come. Also the fact that the day of one's death is known only to Allah and can never be calculated by Man, encourages the Muslim to be persevering and faithful in his actions.

So, we have looked at mankind within Islam as being a responsible creature guided by rules and examples from the sources of Islamic knowledge - the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sunnah. After completing our discussion of the characteristic concepts of Islam, we now turn to the determinants of Islamic education.

## Chapter III

### The Determinants of Religious Education

#### Introduction

It is doubtful if the methods applied at present in Islamic education throughout Islamic schools have their origins in Islamic history. However, if we consider the sources of Islamic legislation, we will find that the methods used in Islamic education have roots in both of them. In a search for an uncontaminated Islamic educational system, Nahlawi concluded;

*'If we collect from the history of the Muslim community all aspects of education and teaching ... we will not find the Islamic education system required. Neither imitating 'other systems' or opposing modern education will give us a 'good' Islamic education system. Modifying the existing teaching systems is also not enough, unless the modification is based on a real, original, and comprehensive Islamic and educative system. The only alternative, then, is to see how the first Muslims were educated. The apostle of God Muhammad (pbuh) was their educator. His conduct and reference was based on the Qur'an and on the wisdom, clarity and eloquence bestowed on him. The basis of this education is abundant in the Qur'an and Sunnah and can easily be deduced. And this is a more objective way of studying Islamic education'.<sup>1</sup>*

For Islamic education, the methods are embedded in the context of the faith itself. These methods are most efficient when used in connection with the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

#### Sources of Islamic Education

##### I. The Glorious Qur'an

The Glorious Qur'an is the first and most important source of Islamic nurture. Within it is found a complete system of methods and regulations from which Islamic nurture comes.

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<sup>1</sup> Nahlawi, A., *'Al-Tarbia El-Islamiya wal Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and New Problems)*, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, pp.24-25.

## II. The Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah

The Sunnah is the second most important source for Islamic nurture. As such not only does it provide backup and explanation of the Qur'an, but in it are also found many detailed aspects of faith and their practical application. These two features are very important in forming the methods that are employed in religious education.

In this chapter both sources will be discussed. Focusing on their methodologies, relevant issues will be explained as required.

### I. The Holy Qur'an - the authoritative book of study

The Qur'an is the heart of the Islamic Religion. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said; *'The best among you [Muslims] are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it'*<sup>2</sup>. Whilst an enormous amount has been written about the Qur'an, it is not appropriate to summarise it all here. However, two main issues will be examined.

#### i. In what way is the Qur'an relevant to the methodology of Islamic education?

The following three features seem relevant to the methodology of Islamic education:

##### a. The Qur'an determines the content of religious education.

The Qur'an determines what is to be studied - it is the basis of the curriculum.

A. Ramzi said:

*'The Holy Qur'an is not one of many reference points for Islamic education, it is the sole criterion for all thought behind it, and behind all other aspects of Islamic society. It is the standard reference for all legislation and jurisprudence, the main inspiration for Islamic opinion, whether philosophical thought or for practical activities and is the*

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhari, *'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari'*, trans. Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol. VI, Kazi publications, 1983, p.501.



*pillar of every individual's life and that of society as a whole'.<sup>3</sup>*

From this we can see that the Qur'an is the prime source of Islamic educative thought, both in educational legislation, principle and practice. Therefore for Muslims, it is the touchstone of what is to be taught to children.

In the Islamic textbooks used in the UAE, Qur'anic verses are used as the subjects of the lesson or to support, illustrate or provide evidence for the ideas taught.

b. The Qur'an prescribes the scope of religious education

1. Nurturing the Intellect

One of the greatest aims of the Holy Qur'an is to nurture the worship of God Almighty in Man. Many verses of the Qur'an lay stress on the importance of nurturing the intellect by exhorting Man to think, remember and contemplate in order to reach a firm belief and to worship God properly:

*'[Here is] a Book which we have sent down Unto thee, full of blessings, That they may meditate on its signs, and that Men of Understanding may receive admonition'.<sup>4</sup>*

From this we can see that the Qur'an follows a method based on contemplation and reflection. Many verses of the Qur'an invite people to investigate, reason and use their intellects and strongly disdains those who do not think about what happens around them in Creation:

*'Those truly fear Allah Among His Servants, who have knowledge'.<sup>5</sup>*

*'Say: "Are the blind equal with those who see? or the depths of*

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<sup>3</sup> Ramzi, A.H., *'An-nazariyya al-Islamiyya fi falsafat ad-dirasat al-ijtima'iyya at-tarbawiyya (The Islamic theory through the philosophy of socio-educational studies)'*, 1st ed., Dar ath-thaqafa, Duha, 1984, p39.

<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an, 38:29.

<sup>5</sup> The Qur'an, 35:28.

*darkness equal with Light?"'.<sup>6</sup>*

Those who do not use the intelligence bestowed on them for the purpose for which it was created and who neglect God's signs are the ones who are disdained. God reproached them saying:

*'And how many signs In the heavens and the earth Do they pass by? yet they turn [their faces] away from them!'.<sup>7</sup>*

In the Qur'an, when asking people to obey God and his apostle, a dignified analogy was presented:

*'For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb, those who understand not'.<sup>8</sup>*

The "deaf and dumb" here refers to people who do not think about what happens around them, nor about their position in the cosmos, who do not propose solutions nor express opinions about the events and matters that take place around them. These people are considered to be in a state lower than that of the animals since animals adapt to their environment according to their capabilities and refuse to follow blindly the conditions imposed on them. Animals do what they are created for, they can distinguish the beneficial from the harmful.

The Qur'an also argues against blind imitation of fathers and forefathers in matters that are unreasonable and illogical:

*'When they do aught that is shameful, they say: "We found our fathers doing so"'.<sup>9</sup>*

As well as exhorting Man to seek and use knowledge, the Qur'an also embodies many philosophical and scientific positions which are in harmony with the

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<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an, 13:16.

<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an, 12:105.

<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an, 8:22.

<sup>9</sup> The Qur'an, 7:28.

Islamic comprehensive and universal view. This view encompasses all creation and indicates the origin of the Universe and life in this world and in the hereafter. It maintains that order, purpose, wisdom, harmony and co-operation are witnessed in nature despite apparent inconsistencies and conflicts amongst its elements. The term "Theological Argument" was adopted to describe this. All this forms the basis of Islamic education, viz seeking knowledge, using it, harmonizing science and philosophy within it, resolving conflict and differences, sensitivity to events, and so on. In fact, a complete framework and guide upon which to base a curriculum.

## 2. Nurturing of Conduct

The Holy Qur'an educates people in the virtues of moderation, probity and guidance through God's law

*'And if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows my Guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve'.<sup>10</sup>*

*'Therefore stand firm [in the straight path] as thou art commanded, Thou and those who with thee Turn [unto Allah]; and transgress not [from the path]: for He seeth Well all that ye do'.<sup>11</sup>*

## 3. Nurturing of feelings and self-direction

The Holy Qur'an nurtures the heart, feelings and emotions, interests and inclinations and exalts them:

*'Has not the time arrived for the Believers that Their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth Which has been revealed [to them]'.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> The Qur'an, 2:38.

<sup>11</sup> The Qur'an, 11:112.

<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an, 57:16.

In the Holy Qur'an the supreme principle is the purification of the soul and nurturing it in goodness. Depending on its nurture, the soul is susceptible to goodness as well as to evil:

*'By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; - Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!'.<sup>13</sup>*

*'The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he [will prosper] that brings to Allah A sound heart'.<sup>14</sup>*

The Qur'an points out Man's instinctual impulses and disciplines them. One of the verses on this subject says:

*'Truly man was created very impatient; fretful when evil touches him, and niggardly when Good reaches him; not so those devoted to prayer'.<sup>15</sup>*

The verse illustrates negative human reactions to circumstances, both good and bad and says Man can avoid these by prayer. Those who are devoted to prayer (ie remembering God) are thereby elevated above becoming a prey to fear and niggardliness. Thus, the influence of God refines human impulses and directs them towards good.

So the Qur'an addresses the intellect, the conduct, the emotions - the whole person.

c. The Qur'an specifies the purpose of religious education

The Qur'an is the divine text of the Islamic mission, which is revealed to Muhammad (pbuh), son of Abdullah. Muhammad (pbuh) had to recite all that had been revealed to him in order to teach people the wisdom within the Qur'an so that

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<sup>13</sup> The Qur'an, 91:7-10.

<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an, 26:88-89.

<sup>15</sup> The Qur'an, 70:19-22.

they could be purified and cleansed from sin. The Qur'an includes the rules, virtues and precepts that Muslims should follow in their lives and conduct in order to create the ideal society in which happiness in both worlds will be realised.

*'The Holy Qur'an is the pivot of Islamic life. It is a book revealed by Almighty God to His apostle Muhammad (pbuh) between the year 610 and 632 from the Preserved Tablet. It includes a comprehensive system of principles and decrees. It requires from believers obedience to its orders'.<sup>16</sup>*

From this, the position of the Qur'an in Islam and in education becomes clear; It is the basis on which everything is built.

*'[The] Qur'an is not merely for recitation and benediction, although it is blessed. Its real blessings are in contemplating and understanding its meanings and aims and then applying them to one's life. The one who does not do this and contents himself with reciting only without thinking or applying may be subject to the threat' [of temptation].<sup>17</sup>*

The Qur'an is designed to establish the *Shariah*; the whole system of life of the Muslim. It is not merely a historic document, but is intended to develop personal spiritual growth, and to foster a community life.

ii. What are the implications of having an authoritative book at the heart of an education system?

a. The existence of the Qur'an as an authoritative book embodying a methodology for teaching its message is at the heart of the Islamic educational system. Its methods are therefore appropriate if employed in accordance with the content of the Qur'an. However, this does not mean that there is no opportunity for and modernization in teaching aids or methods. It is a major mistake to differentiate

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<sup>16</sup> Fakhri, M., '*Tarikh al-falsafa al-islamiyya (History of islamic philosophy)*'. Ad-dar al-muttahida lin-nashr, Al-jami'a al-amrikeiyya, Beirut, 1974, p10.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Banna, H., '*Maqasid al-Qur'an al-Karim (The Holly Qur'an Objectives)*', Dar ash-shihab, 1979, p6.

between the spiritual and human innovation, and not to allow a combination of both. The element of worship is not necessarily opposed to human innovation but this ought to be the guiding and controlling factor for that innovation. This is in fact what usually happens in life and represents an account of human civilisation and *Khilafa* on earth. This accountability is compulsory for humans as a repayment for the many blessings given to Man, for such innovation is looked upon as a work of worship and a way of thanking God for his many blessings.

In my opinion such innovation should not only be applied in practical and constructive fields, but it should cover all related aspects; this covers ways of applying existing human resources. Innovation does not conflict with Islam and making use of modern available teaching aids and methods in the educational domain does not conflict with Islamic principles, especially when these methodologies do not involve aspects offensive to Islam. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

*'Invite [all] to the Way of the Lord with wisdom, ...'*<sup>18</sup>

In a Hadith narrated to the Prophet (pbuh) it is said that wisdom is the desired goal of Muslim, whenever he encounters it, it must be welcomed. Wisdom here means intelligent application of knowledge, including means of application. This clearly indicates that Islam encourages innovation in the field of methodology. Hereby, Muslim teachers must use all effective and suitable methodologies to achieve the desired goal. Muslim teachers can work on other material which is not found in the Qur'an if it is in harmony with what the Qur'an teaches or even if it is a natural extension of it.

b. I have mentioned earlier that the Qur'an has a methodology that is unique to it, and which addresses every element of the human person. It does not only deal with the intellectual aspects but also with conduct and behaviour, the emotional aspects and feelings of the human himself. Therefore, religious teaching methods are

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<sup>18</sup> The Qur'an, 16:125.

intended to cover all aspects of the pupils' needs. This is in fact a reflection of comprehensive Islam (illustrated in chapter two). Qur'anic methodologies aim to embrace the goal of establishing the *Ummah* which will work on reviving the *Khilafa* on earth. However, are the methods applied in the UAE comprehensive? This issue will be examined in further detail in a later chapter.

c. According to the above goal of Qur'anic methodology, methods ought to help children to enter the *umma* and be good followers of the *shariah*. Therefore, there must be special care taken to ensure the methods used convince pupils of the truth of what they are being taught. The aim of understanding cannot be achieved by simply informing the students of the facts. The latter method would lead to mental idleness and subsequently forgetting what has been taught. The Qur'an, however, aims to achieve a change in behaviour as a logical response to teaching. Therefore, intellectual discussion, emotional influence and practical application are required in order that pupils achieve total acknowledgement of Islam. This cannot be achieved without the opportunity for freedom of expression and freedom of activity.

Even though the Qur'an is authoritative, comes from God and contains no errors or untruth, the new methods and innovations not contained in the Qur'an may be used. They are acceptable if they encourage children to understand and explore its truth, and then to accept and obey it. They are not acceptable if they only allow children to reach the point of knowing the contents of the Qur'an without understanding and reflection (i.e. recall it in an unthinking way).

## **II. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) - the paradigmatic teacher**

Muslims believe that Muhammad (pbuh) was exempt from making mistakes when proclaiming His message. God set out for him the Islamic law and system. As far as Muslims are concerned, in matters to do with education and guidance, the apostle of God laid the foundation and exemplified the way which should be followed in theory and practice. This is the basis of the Islamic teaching programme. It is the

basis of both individual and social efficacy and guidance in Islamic life. No activity, thought or social phenomenon can be considered Islamic if it does not comply with the Sunnah as much as it does with the Holy Book. Any innovation must not conflict, but be in harmony with the Qur'an. No-one can be considered a Muslim if he does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and allows himself to be guided by it willingly and consciously in his deeds. Therefore, Muhammad (pbuh) is worthy of being taken as an example, to be followed because this complies with one of God's commands and because love for Muhammad (pbuh) leads to God's love and pleasure.

Just as there is an authoritative book at the heart of Islamic education so there is an authoritative teacher. If the Qur'an is the 'What' of religious education; then Muhammad (pbuh) is the 'Who' and the 'How'. His Sunnah is the framework for all intellectual understanding solely on account of his prophethood and not for any other reason, such as His being from the tribe of the Quraish or being an Arab. His methodology is to be found in the Hadith. Here we can see the sunnah of the prophet in detail. To know Muhammad (pbuh), the educationalist, we have to explore the basis on which he built up his education system, the methods he followed and his characteristics as a teacher. In the rest of this chapter, I will try to answer the following question: 'What is the portrait of the paradigmatic teacher which emerges from this material?'

a. The success of his methodology

Muhammad's methodology was demonstrably effective. The results of his teaching surpasses any other mission in history. Therefore his methods are authoritative.

*'The veracity of any system can be evaluated - if the right conditions are available - through its success and the results realised by this success. If we apply this rule to the Prophet's methodology in education we will find that its effect and its great success is not*



achieved by any other methodology of education in history.<sup>19</sup>

*'Muhammad (pbuh) succeeded with his perfect system of education to transform rough Arabs into monks at night and knights during the day; desiring for their brothers what they desired for themselves; they give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their own lot, by the testimony of friend and foe. God their Creator witnesses that they are the best of people evolved for mankind; enjoying what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God.'*<sup>20</sup>

#### b. The focus of his methodology

*'The aim of Muhammad in inviting people [to Islam] is their guidance. This is proved by what is said in the Holy Qur'an: "And thus have we, by our command, sent inspiration to thee: Thou knewest not [before] what was Revelation, and what was Faith; but we have made the [Qur'an] A Light, wherewith we guide such of our servants as we will; and verily thou dost guide [men] to the straight way". (Qur'an 62:52). Muhammad's means of guiding people was by conveying what the Almighty God commanded Him to convey. "O Apostle! proclaim the [message] which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaiming the mission". (Qur'an 5:70). From this it becomes clear that guidance is the greatest type of education and its clearest form is proclaiming the Mission'*<sup>21</sup>

The above quotation shows that God put guidance in the highest rank of educational methods. By studying the Holy Qur'an and examining the life of the Prophet (pbuh) we will find that the basis of this education is: Belief, Worship, and Jurisprudence

##### 1) Belief as a basis of Education

*'When Muhammad educated his followers he nurtured them in belief*

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<sup>19</sup> Qal'aji, M.R., *'Dirasa tahliliyya li-shakhsiyyat ar-rasul Muhammad Salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam min khilal Siratihi ash-sharifa (An analytical study of the character of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through his bibliography)'*, Dar an-nafais, 1988, pp.263.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.264.

<sup>21</sup> Nahlawi, A., *'Al-Tarbia El-Islamiyya wal Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and New Problems)'*, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, pp.27.

*in God, the hereafter, the angels, the revealed books and the prophet. The beginning of creation, the Islamic view of mankind, life and the universe; Man's duty and the purpose of his existence, his destination and his relationship with the cosmos and man's absolute dependence on the Creator of this Universe and his duties towards Him. Muhammad laid stress exclusively on belief, especially, during the Meccan period, for his aim then was to cleanse the Muslim's mind from polytheism and implant belief in One God in order to establish a solid basis for the application of the decrees that followed.'*<sup>22</sup>

Anyone looking at the Islamic education systems at present will find that the main stress is on belief and it is from this premise that other matters are tackled. What concerns us in this study is the case of UAE where Islamic education gives priority to belief.

## 2) Worship as a basis of Education

Worship can be defined as every deed that is done for the sake of God. Thus worship includes all human activities if they have been done to gain God's pleasure. Worship is the fruit, or the result of belief and since the doctrine of Islam includes the universe, life and Man then, worship encompasses all aspects of human life. Therefore, according to Islam, life is all worship. The Qur'an says:

*'say: "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are [all] for Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds: No partner hath He: This am I commanded and I am the first of those who bow to His will".'*<sup>23</sup>

*'Muhammad (pbuh) was able to order the Muslims' thoughts through belief, and organised their lives and behaviour through worship. Prayer, for instance, organises the day in such a way that the worshipper has to have a continuous connection with God and, therefore, remembers Him whenever he is tempted to make a mistake. Fasting disciplines Man's desires, pilgrimage organises his social life,*

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, summary of pages 32-33.

<sup>23</sup> The Qur'an, 6:162-163.

*almsgiving organises his economical and financial relations.*<sup>24</sup>

### 3) Jurisprudence as a basis of education

*'These laws proceed from God and are meant to be for all mankind for all time. They give human thoughts deeper dimensions. This is why to study these laws and specialise in them one is required to be able to read and write and, to understand the inheritance decrees, arithmetic is required, in order to know places referred to, geography is required and astronomy in order to determine prayer times and so on. When Muslims followed these laws they excelled in all these sciences and became teachers of the world.'*<sup>25</sup>

Muhammad (pbuh) educated his followers on the basis of Qur'anic jurisprudence, helping them to understand the comprehensiveness and absolute nature of God's laws which include all creatures and their continuity i.e. they are not bound by a specific time but are universal and transcendent.

Muhammad (pbuh) educated his followers on this basis and encouraged them to steep themselves in the science of jurisprudence in order to regulate their lives and relationships. This basis exists in the UAE in a theoretical form but its application in life varies considerably. This may point to the ineffectiveness of the teaching method for religious education which treats information as material to be memorised rather than the rules by which to lead one's life.

#### c. The style of his methodology

From the previous three bases of Muhammad's mission we can see that belief builds up conviction, that worship is the application of these convictions and that jurisprudence regulates Man's life in society. To convert idle Arabs to active Muslims, Muhammad, by God's will, had a dignified style of his own. In a narrated

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<sup>24</sup> Nahlawi, A., '*Al-Tarbia El-Islamiyya wal Mushkilat El-Muasira (Islamic Nurture and New Problems)*', Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1985, [summary of pages 42-46].

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, summary of pages 46-51.

Hadith the Prophet said that God had endowed him with gifts. It is not possible to separate methods from the man, as it is said that 'What gets taught is the teacher'.

Foremost in Muhammad's style was setting a good example. He was a model in his conduct towards his family and in all his behaviour. Thus his oral teaching was extended by his practical demonstration of how to behave. Muslims are required to follow his example. God says in the Holy Qur'an that He was recommending to his companions that their words should be followed by action. Many verses in the Holy Qur'an direct people towards good deeds and invite them to excel in whatever they undertake. Also many Hadiths encourage Man to do good.

Muhammad (pbuh) established a personal relationship with his disciples - of affection and concern. He was accustomed to guide his companions in all matters, communal and personal.

His manner can be described as one of impartiality and fairness. As an educator he did not take sides even if, by doing so, he would not harm the other side.

*Salama bin Al-Akwa' (mAbpwh) related how the Prophet (pbuh) passed by some people of the tribe of Bani Aslam who were practising archery. The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'O Bani Ismail! practise archery as your father Ismail was a great archer. Keep on throwing arrows and I am with Bani so and so.' So one of the parties stopped shooting. Allah's Apostle (pbuh) said 'why do you not continue?' They replied 'How should we throw while you are with them [ie. on their side]?' On that the Prophet (pbuh) said 'Throw, and I am with all of you.'*<sup>26</sup>

His personal stance was clear even in the case of difficult situations requiring compassion so that sometimes necessary decisions might appear as a withdrawal of affection. Abdullah bin K'ab narrates how he heard K'ab bin Malik tell how, when he did not join the battle of Tabuk, Allah's Apostle (pbuh) forbade Muslims to speak to him and how he would greet Muhammad and would wonder whether the Prophet

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Bukhari, 'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari', trans. Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol.III, Kazi publications, 1983, p.466.

did move his lips to return his greetings or not till fifty nights passed away.....)<sup>27</sup>.

Muhammad (pbuh) cared for his companions' conduct as well as their moral wellbeing, and linked good manners to the message he brought. Umar bin Abi Salama (mAbpwh) tells an experience of his childhood with the prophet:

*'I was a boy under the care of Allah's Prophet (pbuh) and my hand used to go around the dish while I was eating. So Allah's Apostle (pbuh) said to me, "O boy! Mention the name of Allah and eat with your right hand, and eat of the dish that is nearer to you". Since then I have applied these instructions when eating.'*<sup>28</sup>

Muhammad's (pbuh) personal relationship with his disciples was one of tolerance and forbearance - he made allowances for people's ignorance:

*'Abu Huraira (mAbpwh) narrated : A bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the people rushed to beat him. Allah's Apostle (pbuh) ordered them to leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler [full] of water over the place where he has passed urine. The Prophet (pbuh) then said "you have been sent to make things easy [for the people] and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them".'*<sup>29</sup>

From this Hadith it becomes clear that one of the most important characteristics of an educator is to make things easy for the learner, not difficult.

Making allowances for age and personality was also part of Muhammad's attitude toward his disciples. The Prophet's wife Aisha (mAbpwh) relates how:

*'One day the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) asked me, "What are these?" "My dolls" I replied, "What is this in the middle"? he asked. "A horse" I replied. "And what are these things on it" he asked. "Wings", I said "A horse with wings?" he asked. "Have not you heard that Solomon, the Son of David, had horses with wings" I said. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) laughed so heartily that I*

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<sup>27</sup> ibid, Vol.VIII, p.180.

<sup>28</sup> ibid, Vol. VII, p 221.

<sup>29</sup> ibid, Vol.VIII, p.94.

*could see his molars.*<sup>30</sup>

From Aisha's narration, we can see that the Prophet (pbuh) allowed children to behave in many ways he prohibited for adults (she was at the time of the incident no more than 15 years old). Whilst he forbade the possession of statues to adults, he allowed children to play with dolls. The following illustrates how Muhammad (pbuh) tempered his treatment and advice in accordance with individual circumstances: (Described by M.Qal'aji)

*'The Prophet (pbuh) treated women gently. He called them al-qawarir (beautiful bottles made of fine fragile glass) and advised men to treat them accordingly. He was more tolerant towards bedouins than towards townsmen because bedouins are more ignorant and rough. He treated those who made mistakes in ignorance in a different way from those who knowingly made mistakes. He treated noble people who were tempted by Satan in a moment of weakness differently from criminals who were used to crime.'*<sup>31</sup>

Last but not least, Muhammad was sensitive to people's feelings, even when they made errors, he tried not to expose or embarrass them unduly, ie he used not to mention names to avoid embarrassing the person at mistake. An example of this is

*Narrated Anas bin Malik (mAbpwh); The Prophet (pbuh) said 'what is wrong with those people who look towards the sky during the prayer'? His talk grew stern while delivering this speech and he said, 'They should stop (looking towards the sky during the prayer); otherwise their eye-sight would be taken away'.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Al-Qaradawi, Y., *'Al-Halal wal Haram fil Islam (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam)'*, translated by K.El-Helbawy, M.Siddiqui and S.Shukry, American Trust Publications, USA, (no pub. year) p.107.

<sup>31</sup> Qal'aji, M.R., *'Dirasa tahliliyya li-shakhsiyyat ar-rasul Muhammad Salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam min khilal Siratihi ash-sharifa (An analytical study of the character of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through his bibliography)'*, Dar an-nafais, 1988, pp.274-275

<sup>32</sup> Al-Bukhari, *'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari'*, trans. by Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol.I, Kazi publications, 1983, p.401.

This approach helps the person at fault to correct himself without being embarrassed because he has been named. It also highlights the mistakes for others so that they may avoid them. It preserves the learner's self esteem as well as keeping a good relationship between him and the teacher. Another example is:

*Abu Masud Al-Ansari (mAbpwh) narrated how : 'Once a man said to Allah's Apostle (pbuh) 'O Allah's Apostle! I may not attend the [compulsory congregational] prayer because so and so [the Imam] prolongs the prayer when he leads us for it'. goes on, 'I never saw the Prophet (pbuh) more furious in giving advice that he was on that day. The Prophet (pbuh) said: 'O people! Some of you make others dislike good deeds [the prayers]. So whoever leads the people in prayer should shorten it because among them there are the sick, the weak and the needy [having some jobs to do]'* <sup>33</sup>

d. The essence of his methodology

The essence of Muhammad's method of teaching seems to have been surprise. Time and again he startles or shocks his hearers into listening and learning. His methods jolt people into thinking hard, reviewing their perceptions and expectations. His speech was clear, vivid, concise and decisive. Aisha (mAbpwh) said,

*'The apostle of God (pbuh) did not talk as you do. He spoke concisely and decisively. You could count the number of words he uttered. Whenever he spoke he would repeat what he said three times to enable people to memorize what he said'.* <sup>34</sup>

He was the master of vivid image, the memorable gesture, the probing question and the telling phrase. He used dramatic repetition and paradox. Images and similes were used to draw comparisons. For example, the use of a familiar object as an analogy of a spiritual truth, seen in the following example, to allow the learner to grasp an idea.

*Abu Musa Al-Ashari (mAbpwh) narrated; Once the Prophet (pbuh) said:*

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<sup>33</sup> ibid, Vol. I, p.74.

<sup>34</sup> ibid, Vol.IV, p.494.

*'The example of a believer who recites the Qur'an is like that of a citrus fruit which tastes good and smells good. And the believer who does not recite the Qur'an is like a date which is good in taste but has no smell. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who recites the Qur'an is like the Raihana (sweet basil) which smells good but tastes bitter. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who does not recite the Qur'an is like the Cdocynth which tastes bitter and has no smell'.<sup>35</sup>*

He uses an unexpected touch of humour to put across his point also. It is reported <sup>36</sup> that once an old woman came to him, saying, 'O messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that He admit me to the Garden [paradise]'. The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'O mother of such a person, no old woman will enter the Garden'. The woman broke down and wept supposing that she would not enter Paradise. The Prophet (pbuh) then explained to her that no old woman would enter the Garden as an old woman, for Allah would restore her youth and admit her - "We have created [their companions] of special creation. And made them virgin-pure [and undefiled]. Beloved [by nature] equal in age."<sup>37</sup>. A further three examples of the prophet (pbuh) using an extreme case that challenges expectation are:

a. Abu Huraira (mAbpwh) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said:

*'A prostitute was forgiven by Allah, because, passing by a panting dog near a well and seeing that the dog was about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe, and tying it with her head-cover she drew out some water for it. So Allah forgave her because of that.'<sup>38</sup>*

b. Abdullah bin 'umar (mAbpwh) narrated:

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<sup>35</sup> ibid, Vol. VI, p.498.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Qaradawi, Y., 'Al-Halal wal Haram fil Islam (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam)', translated by K.El-Helbawy, M.Siddiqui and S.Shukry, American Trust Publications, USA, (no pub. year) p.291-292.

<sup>37</sup> The Qur'an, 56:35-37.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Bukhari, 'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari', trans. Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol.IV, Kazi publications, 1983, pp.338-339.



*'A lady was punished because of a cat which she had imprisoned till it died. She entered the [Hell] fire because of it, for she neither gave it food nor water as she had imprisoned it, nor set it free to eat from the vermin of the earth.'*<sup>39</sup>

c. Narrated Abu-Dhar (mAbpwh): The Prophet (pbuh) said;

*'Gabriel said to me, "whoever amongst your followers die without having worshipped others besides Allah, will enter paradise (or will not enter the Hell Fire)". The Prophet (pbuh) asked: 'Even if he has committed illegal sexual intercourse or theft?' He replied "Even then".'*<sup>40</sup>

From the previous three examples we can see that Muhammad (pbuh) employed the arousal of interest approach in an interesting, unexpected way. He turns people from Hell and brings glad tidings of Paradise, he cautions against abandoning prayer and brings the glad tidings of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Muhammad (pbuh) also used demonstration - a common teaching method - as a method of educating his companions. Two instances follow;

a. Imam Ahmad related that Gaber said:

*'We were sitting with the Prophet of Allah. He drew a line before him and said:- This is the way of Allah, and he drew two lines on his right hand and two lines on his left hand and said this is the way of evil [Siton], then he put his hand at the middle line and recited Allah's words "verily, this is my way leading straight, follow it, follow not other paths, they will scatter you about from his great path, thus does he recommend you that you may be righteous".'*<sup>41</sup>

b. Abu Huraira (mAbpwh) records how the Prophet (pbuh) said,

*'Allah has made an opening in the wall of the Gog and Magog [giant-like people] like this, ' and he made with his hand [with the help of his*

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<sup>39</sup> ibid, Vol.IV, p.456.

<sup>40</sup> ibid, Vol.VII, p. 301.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Tarbiyah, *Journal of the Ministry of Education*, UAE, vol.59, 1992, pp.99-100.

*fingers].*<sup>42</sup>

Provocative and dramatic repetition as teaching methods are found in Muhammad's methodology. This method entails letting the learner find the solution by himself, and only if he cannot arrive at the correct solution does the educator clarify the matter for him.

*Abu Huraira (mAbpwh) narrates the incident:*

*'Allah's apostle (pbuh) entered the mosque and a man followed him. The man prayed and then greeted to the Prophet (pbuh) who told him, 'Go back and pray, for you have not prayed'. The man went back, prayed in the same way as before, returned and greeted the Prophet (pbuh) who said, 'Go back and pray, for you have not prayed'. This happened three times. The man said, "By him who sent you with the truth, I cannot offer the prayer in a better way than this please, teach me how to pray".*<sup>43</sup>

Muhammad could simply have explained how to pray properly to the man but by having to do it himself, until he got it right, the lesson was more effective. A further example is;

*'A man came to Allah's Prophet (pbuh) asking:*

*'to whom should I give the most respect in life?' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'your mother' the man said 'who is next?' The Prophet (pbuh) said who is next the Prophet said. 'Your mother' the man asked for the fourth time 'who is next?' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'your father'.<sup>44</sup>*

This is an example of the use of repetition for dramatic emphasis. See Hadith no. 822 in vol.III of Al-Bukhari, where the Prophet (pbuh) repeats his point ('beware from giving a false statement') three times in order to make others understand.

And last but not least, the probing questioning method was employed by the

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<sup>42</sup> Al-Bukhari, *'The translation of the meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari'*, trans. Dr. M.M.Khan, Vol.IX, Kazi publications, 1983, p.187.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, Vol.I, p.404.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, Vol.VIII, p.2.

Prophet Muhammad, as well:

*Ibn 'Umar narrated how the Prophet (pbuh) said at Mina:*

*'Do you know what day it is today? They [the people] replied: 'Allah and his apostle know better'. He said "To-day is the 10th of Dhul-Hijja, the sacred [forbidden] day. Do you know what town is this town?' 'They [the people] replied "Allah and his apostle know better". He said: "This is the [forbidden] sacred town [Mecca - a sanctuary]" [part of the hadith]<sup>45</sup>.*

These are only a few samples of Muhammad's (pbuh) methodology. Readers of his life will find many more treasures to give convincing evidence of Muhammad (pbuh) being a consummate teacher. Hereby, it is concluded that in the heart of Islamic religious education there is an authoritative book and an authoritative teacher.

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, Vol. VIII, p.43.

## Chapter IV

# The Community and its Way of Life: Implications for the Role of the Teacher

### Introduction

I have already explored a number of ways in which crucial features of Islam may be shown to have implications for education and methodology. In this chapter the discussion will centre on the Community of Islam (*Ummah*) and the Way of Life (*Shariah*) which together shape the whole existence of Muslims. These two features determine the scope of the educational enterprise and its essential purpose. They are, not surprisingly, intimately related to the religious education teacher's understanding of her role.

### The Community of Believers

As stated in Chapter II, the Islamic concept of society is '*Ummah*' which does not connote a racial, geographical or kinship unit; *Ummah* is an ideological community - 'a brotherhood in the faith'. Belief in one God, therefore, forms the essential core and the axiological basis for Islamic society.

Society consists of many agencies (ie. governmental and domestic organs) that collaborate to form the community. Basically, these agencies act as a moderating influence on individuals in the society. Islamic ideology requires that such influential agencies produce an actual modern Islamic model. Therefore, for a society to flourish in-line with this ideology, it has to have active and influential agencies that direct their activities toward the aims of the *Ummah* described above.

Therefore, it can be seen that education is not the task of one agency alone even if that agency (for instance the educational institutions of the community) possesses all the necessary requirements. Islamic *Du'ah* (missionaries) agree that

education (nurture) is a joint task between the home (parents), the mosque, the school and other social institutions which affect the young citizen in one way or another. Each one of these participates in the education of children in their particular environment and does so using means and methods evolved by them for this purpose. Some of these institutions may oppose the realisation of the goals of other institutions involved in educating the citizen, for instance, a bad television programme may erase the positive effect of another institution. It is suggested that liaison between all the institutions that affect the personality of people are necessary in order to avoid contradiction and bring about co-operation. The school, especially through the teacher, is required to extend its activity outside its walls and converse with other institutions which are participating in education. This is because it is evident that the outside environment also leaves deep impressions and has a great influence on what our children learn at school. Therefore, for teaching, all the agencies which impinge upon the growing child - home, school, mosque and later, nation and world - must embrace the principles of Islam. Education cannot proceed in isolation from these agencies.

### **The Way of Life**

Ideally, the main goal of an Islamic society has always been the implementation of the norms of Islam as codified in the *Shariah* for the welfare of the *Ummah*. *Shariah* is the collective code of the laws of Islam as derived from the Qur'an, the Prophetic Traditions and the consensus of the *Ummah* and vouchsafed by the learned *Ulama* who are the scholars and custodians of the faith. The *Shariah* forms the main societal norm of Islam and encompasses laws concerning all the political, social, economic, socio-economic, cultural and religio-moral aspects of the *Ummah*.

We have already shown in Chapter II that the Islamic concepts are integrated and comprehensive covering all aspects of Man's life - the intellectual, emotional,

physical, material, and of course, the spiritual. *Shariah*, as part of Islam, is comprehensive too. As a way of life, it embraces Man as a whole person. It involves not just the brain, but belief, thought, feeling, practice, obedience etc.

The *Shariah* is involved in the world around Man too - in every activity in life, whether carried out by him or related to his surrounding in one way or another. *Shariah* not only bears upon education but also worship, morality, work, law, relationships, politics, economics etc. In an understanding and flexible way, it regulates human life. Man, carrying out the precepts of the *Shariah* for the sake of Allah, is said to be in *Jihad* and will be rewarded for it.

### **The Teacher's Role**

The concepts of *Shariah* and *Ummah* described above indicate that the role of the teacher is a comprehensive one. She is teaching for a community larger than the classroom and for a way of life larger than the intellect or schooling. Such a task is not easy, its success mainly depends on the calibre of the teacher and how she regards her work.

It can be argued that in the past of every great man or woman, be they warrior, religious leader, politician, poet or artist, has been at least one teacher whose influence has been decisive in forming the character of that person. Thus do teachers leave their mark on the world.

This suggests that the influence of teachers in societies is very great. Teaching can be seen as the 'mother profession' because it precedes all other professions and provides its offspring with the fundamental elements to do anything - scientific, socio-cultural and moral qualities and qualifications. Another dimension to the profession of teaching is suggested below:

*'Teaching is the profession through which teachers try to renew or innovate and illuminate the minds of their students, to clarify the obscure and unveil the hidden. They also try to link the present to the past, and distinguish good from bad in order to show to their students*

*the right way. In so doing teachers create in the growing generation hope and certainty and define for them the valuable and the valueless. In short, teachers leave deep influences and unfadeable impressions in society. They also contribute towards the prosperity of their society and the unity of their people by uniting their thoughts and feelings. Indeed their work as teachers is the best they could offer to their societies. Not only this, by performing this job they contribute towards the formation of the future of their societies but also by forming the character and personality of the youth who will carry out important tasks and responsibilities in their countries'.<sup>1</sup>*

If, as described above, the teacher plays a fundamental and influential role in the development of children and young people, the teacher's contribution is vital, not only for the individual but for the well-being of society at large. Some teachers do not fulfil their duties properly or do not realise the importance of the field in which they work. However, many religious teachers fulfil their duties conscientiously and well, in order to please God. This does not mean that they do not face problems and difficulties, and this will be explored later in the thesis.

I have tried above to define the comprehensive nature of the teacher's role in some detail. At this point it is appropriate to examine the various elements of that role with regard to the *Ummah*. Clearly, such roles can be controversial. Nevertheless, my discussion will centre on the following question: 'What are the implications of teaching for *Ummah* and *Shariah*?' We can identify six functions of the teacher which follow from this. These are inter-dependent and inter-act with one another. It is a little artificial to separate them but it may be useful for the purpose of clarity.

### 1. The teacher as faithful Muslim

It is not possible for a teacher to initiate children into the community and the way of life if the teacher is not herself a faithful Muslim. If she is not a believer, she

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<sup>1</sup> Mursi, M.A., '*Al-Muallim wal Manahij wa Turuq at-tadris, (The Teacher, the Curriculum and Teaching Methodology)*', Alam al-kutub, Ar-Riyyadh, 1984, p.15.

does not believe in what she is teaching; cannot empathise with the material used but merely passes on information. To be successful, the teacher must herself be fully committed to the truth of Islam.

A belief in Islam and love of teaching are the ideal motives behind a teacher setting herself upon the vocation of teaching. A teacher should not feel that she is only teaching because she is supposed to be doing so or has to do so for money. If a teacher loves teaching, the result of her efforts will be greater. Anyone pushed into teaching by her circumstances surely will not be as successful in dealing with her students as someone who has chosen of her own volition to be a teacher, ie a teacher needs a sense of vocation. For the Islamic teacher this, mainly, comes from her faith.

A teacher who is a faithful Muslim should be committed to growth in *ilm* (knowledge) herself and as well as for her students. She must be sensitive to her students and her subject. Above all, she must recognise that, being a believer involves emotions as well as responding to arguments. 'Religion is caught not taught'. The above, I believe, are the criteria that a teacher needs to be a good teacher of Islam. The prerequisite of being a faithful Muslim is essential to guarantee that students respond to a teacher successfully in this subject.

In addition, a teacher of Islam should be very much involved in the life of the community and have the capacity to make her students content with themselves and their environment. This will not be possible without the teacher's understanding of the students' personalities and the society they live in and all that affects that society. Also she should understand the importance and dynamism of her job within the wider context of the needs of society. This requires the teacher to be involved in activity outside the school. Commonly a teacher participating in social activities and events of the community will be considered as a social model in the community and thus it is essential that the model is a committed believer. This leads to the second role of the teacher - an ambassador for her faith.



## 2. The teacher as ambassador for Islam

The first role concentrated on the teacher herself, her faith, and her view of the material she teaches. This section concentrates on the teacher as exemplar - commending that world view of Islam and that material to the children. Thus the teacher must be something of an ambassador. So

- (i) She must exemplify the Islamic way of life and be a good Muslim; and
- (ii) She must present to the children an attractive way of life, a role model that they will wish to emulate.

The teacher is supposed to behave in a consistent way and to set a good example. To be convincing and efficient at her job a teacher must not contradict the message she teaches in her lifestyle. She must make it plain she expects good behaviour and work but, because one who does not possess something cannot give it, she must set a good example herself. Thus she must consider her own behaviour before she tries to reform the behaviour of her students.

She must also ensure her personal behaviour and attitudes set the right conditions for a good learning environment. For instance an unhappy teacher will produce unhappy students. The students of a teacher who is bitter about her social or economic status in society cannot be expected to be content with their state and society, for what the teacher feels about the world will affect her message and thereby influence the students whom she educates. Therefore, to be an ambassador of Islam, the teacher must reflect the positive aspects of Islam and be cheerful and optimistic. Pessimistic teachers transmit their pessimism to their students and this may result in apathetic students lacking ambition and aspiration. An example of this: although the state of Muslims these days is not great, teachers should point out that when our ancestors followed the right path and adhered to their belief, they succeeded in every domain in which they participated - conquering, learning, etc. When teachers do this they produce the kind of optimistic people who are needed for the development of our societies.

Consistency of word and actions is also essential for the teacher to fulfil the role of ambassador for Islam. As part of this consistency, she is expected to defend and stand for the truth in which she believes. The teacher who is put in a situation where she has to defend her beliefs teaches her students indirectly one of the most important characteristics of the Muslim and nurtures in them the spirit of belief and the defence of belief. Thus she teaches them how to cling to their beliefs and principles and not to surrender them in the face of opposition. Biographies of Imam Ahmed ben Hanbal (mAbpwh) relate that he was told to change his opinion about a certain religious matter so that people would not be affected by his ideas. Because of his refusal he was imprisoned and tortured. This did not make him change his opinion because he knew his opinion was the truth. Because of his stand his students respected him even more and it is said that not one of them ever deviated from his way and teachings.

A good teacher should also be open minded and accept her mistakes and should be brave enough to be able to say "I don't know" when she comes across something unknown to her. It is far better to say "I don't know but I'll find out" than to give wrong answers and mislead the students. Accordingly, the teacher is one of the first people from whom students learn the principles and rules of consultation. Through her help and guidance as well as her behaviour, they come to know about the advantages of consultation, this great principle of Islam which has helped the development and progress of the Muslim community. When the teacher tells how the Prophet (pbuh) applied this principle it may have little effect on the student's mind but if she herself sets an example and if she can link it to an actual life experience, it will be influential. Most of all, the teacher should allow her students liberty to express themselves, otherwise, how can a teacher who does not allow freedom of speech in the classroom speak about the importance of consultation and deliberation!

The teacher's behaviour should set an example of being a responsible citizen and building up this characteristic in her students.

*'So many students at middle and high schools look for someone to take as a role model. At this stage usually their ideals are those of their teachers because they are in contact with them most of the day and see them even more than their parents.'*<sup>2</sup>

Yet some teachers do not realise how much their behaviour affects the conduct of their students in a direct way. Dr. Mursi concluded that:

*'She should be a good example for her students by being trustworthy, truthful, sincere, clean and tidy and so on'*.<sup>3</sup>

As appearance and behaviour of teachers is influential, their attitude has to match their message. Regarding appearance - 'Islamic teachers shall wear Islamic dress (there are no special clothes to be worn by women in Islam, merely guidelines which prohibit short dress, tight or see through clothes)' <sup>4</sup>. Some teachers I saw in the UAE schools were very chic. Supervisors regularly monitor teachers and award ten per cent to presentation alone. One supervisor told me that this mark was deducted from one teacher because he was seen shopping with his wife and daughters who were not wearing the scarf <sup>5</sup>. When I questioned the supervisor about this remarking that it was outside of school, the response was that the teacher of religion must set an example to students at all times. However, when I asked another supervisor about this he said that

*'he would not have done this, and that the teacher's behaviour in school is what is important'* <sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Mursi, M.M., *'At-Tarbia al-Islamiyya; Osolha wa Tatwearha fi el-Bilad al-Arabiyya (Islamic Education: Its Elements and Development in the Arab Countries)'*, Aalam al-Kutub, 1981, p.87.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p.103.

<sup>4</sup> Supervisor, A.M.

<sup>5</sup> Islamic Education Head Supervisor.

<sup>6</sup> Supervisor, M.G.

I observed that many teachers do not wear Islamic dress and some are untidy. Others were very fat and were ridiculed by the students. Teachers of Islamic education have a responsibility to set a moral example: not to lie, to help people and not to cheat or do anything dishonest or anti-social.

The good teachers whom I saw in the schools I visited were very popular, and had a lot of friends, both inside and outside of their school. They had rapport with students and were good communicators. Such teachers frequently spoke to the pupils about the importance of dress and appearance, and that there were marks to be gained in class for personal appearance. Pupils were advised not to have outrageous hair styles, and girls were advised not to have long fingernails. Both sexes were advised not to smoke. Some of the methods and techniques being applied to achieve good appearance and behaviour by the students are given in Chapter V.

### 3. The teacher as surrogate parent

Since the teacher is introducing children to a way of life she cannot just be a transmitter of information. She must develop a personal relationship with her pupils. She has a pastoral role. There is an affective and moral dimension to her job. Like a good mother she cares for the pupils and is concerned about their personal growth.

I quote here an example of the typical response to a good teacher derived from my observations of 30 teachers in the UAE in my field study: when she enters the classroom, the students will clean the blackboard and organise the room and be alert and looking forward to her arrival. When she enters most of them smile, and feel themselves the teacher's friend, I suppose, this is because she thinks of them as her own children and does her best to make them happy. When a student is absent she inquires about her, and when the absence continues for more than a day she asks the other students to visit her. If a student has a spell in hospital, some teachers may visit her with a group of students, bringing her a gift. The students tell such teachers their problems and their secrets. She usually forgives their small sins.

A personal anecdote may illustrate the point. It was my first year as a teacher in a junior and secondary school. I was giving a lesson, using lots of stories to illustrate my point, and posters for visual impact. During the course of the lesson I drew an animal on the blackboard. One student said 'It's like the teacher'. I was very shocked and hurt, but somehow I managed to gather myself together and said nothing, merely giving her an icy stare. I continued the lesson as if nothing had happened, included her in it, and thanked her when she contributed. She was obviously very surprised, and awaited my punishment, which never came. Eventually this girl came to be one of my best pupils in my subject. She was always very polite and helpful, and she never had less than 90% in my subject. Even after many years, she remains in contact with me.

Similarly, a teacher told me a story about an incident in which she was involved. She was teaching when a student stood up and told her that she was unjust, and that she hadn't marked her examination paper fairly. The teacher told her to come to see her after the lesson and continued to teach. Later they went through the paper together very carefully and the student agreed that the mark she had been given was fair. The teacher awarded her an extra three marks, and told her that if she had anything to say in future, to say it privately. The next day in the class the girl stood up again. She said she wanted to apologise to the teacher, that in fact the teacher had been fair in her marking, that the teacher had many courses of action open to her, such as taking her to the head teacher or punishing her in one way or another for her criticism in class. Instead she chose to practise what she preached and had treated her compassionately. She was very grateful for such an excellent example.<sup>7</sup>

A teacher, like a parent, should know her children very well. This includes knowing the circumstances of those who are going to be taught by her and understanding their personalities and behaviour, and their spiritual needs as well as

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<sup>7</sup> Teacher, F.G.

their physical and intellectual capabilities and limitations. She should not hesitate to ask about their life outside the school. With this information, she is less likely to blame a student for behaviour for which she is not entirely responsible, for example misbehaviour in class due to problems in the home. There are many different problems that can hinder students' progress at school. When a teacher detects such problems and discovers their causes she may be able to help some of her students to overcome some of their problems which could otherwise affect their future.

Just as a parent does not give a child a task beyond its capabilities, so a good teacher, when teaching varying abilities and mixed social groups, will moderate the material and carefully select the questions for each pupil so that the student of low ability is not embarrassed in class nor suffers a loss of esteem and confidence. The teacher asks the more able students to answer the higher level questions in order to stimulate thought <sup>8</sup>.

Teachers are also expected to be ready to respond to the challenge of teaching students who come from widely different backgrounds. Whatever their background and associated difficulties, the teacher is expected to be able to pass on her knowledge to students;

*'A good teacher knows how to deal with his students, each one according to his capabilities and dispositions and according to his social and intellectual background' <sup>9</sup>.*

*'A good teacher considers first the situation of her students. When talking about, for example, the role of parents, a teacher would not ask orphaned children, "Who makes breakfast for you?" but she may ask "Who gave birth to you?". With older groups (12+) the teacher may ask "What can we do for our parents after they've died?". She would avoid talking about Hell with smaller children and would concentrate on more pleasant images, such as paradise. The teacher gives small gifts as a form of reward for the children. Some teachers*

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<sup>8</sup> Teacher, A.B.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazali, Abu-Hamid, *'Ehyaa Ulum ad-Din (Revival of the religious science)'*, Matbaat Subug, Cairo, part one, (no year), p.52.

*may even visit students in their homes, although this is very rare*'.<sup>10</sup>

The teacher who does not break down barriers between herself and her students and does not try to share their feelings and help them with their problems resembles a deaf machine or a tape recorder which transmits the lessons but is remote from the real educative spirit. Thus we can say one criterion for the good Islamic teacher is being humane and understanding the social and psychological circumstances of students.

A surrogate parental teacher should be a trusted advisor and be close enough to her students to share their ideas, emotions and problems. Thus teaching is not just preparing lessons and presenting them to students but has a human element. Students are more interested in a teacher who has some concern for their emotions and their problems and who advises them when necessary. In this way her lessons become very popular. Many students have hated a course only because the teacher was not likeable.

With regard to the above, it is also important to bear in mind that overfriendliness and mothering can have an adverse effect on discipline. The teacher must know how to be friendly and concerned for her students without overstepping the boundaries of the teacher/pupil relationship, for this may lead to disobedience and lack of control in the classroom. The teacher must be sensitive to the nature of her relationship with her students and explore it within the limits of society's values and her status as a teacher. The closeness of the teacher to her students does not mean dismantling all barriers between her and her students to the point of becoming one of them. Some formality between teachers and students must exist. Affection between students and teachers is necessary but respect and distance is required as well. Whilst distinguishing between these two attributes can be a subtle and difficult exercise, an astute teacher knows how to tread the line between them.

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<sup>10</sup> Lecturer, Dr. A.N.

Like a good parent, the teacher is expected to correct pupils' behaviour. This is not limited to the classroom but to their behaviour generally. A teacher should always encourage correct behaviour and forbid what is wrong. If a teacher notices any bad behaviour in a student she should try to put an end to it. By virtue of her experience, status and qualification, she should always be fair and should not take sides under any circumstances. Rather, the teacher should bring quarrelling students to effect a reconciliation.

*'He (she) should not take sides, but be a fair judge who listens to all the students who enter in a conflict. In this way the weak students would seek refuge in him (her) and the oppressors would stop oppressing other students'<sup>11</sup>.*

She should also help her students to solve their problems and show them how to proceed in these cases. In doing so, she may find students will come to her next time they have a problem and ask for help because of her attitude towards them and because she knows them well. Thus she may be able to be a decisive influence on their behaviour and the formation of their moral code.

Conflict-resolution among children sometimes requires being firm.

*'Fairness and consistency by the teacher in dealing with her students creates stability in the classroom. There should be no feeling of injustice. The hard working student knows that she will be rewarded and the lazy one knows that he will not get away unchecked. In this way the atmosphere in the classroom will be calm.'<sup>12</sup>*

Thereby, it is to be concluded that there is a moral dimension to all Islamic education.

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Ghazali, Abu-Hamid, *'Ehyaa Ulum ad-Din (Revival of the religious science)'*, Matbaat Subug, Cairo, part one, (no year), p.52.

<sup>12</sup> Mursi, M.M., *'At-Tarbia al-Islamiyya; Osolha wa Tatwearha fi el-Bilad al-Arabiyya (Islamic Education: Its Elements and Development in the Arab Countries)'*, Aalam al-Kutub, 1981, p.102.



#### 4. The teacher as competent pedagogue

Does the teacher need to be trained in the art of teaching? Of course. We may say that her professionalism will be an important aspect of her role since it will affect the breadth and depth of understanding which she brings to her lessons; her capacity to reflect on what she is doing; to devise a variety of different methods and learning activities; to interest the pupils and thus successfully initiate them into the faith. So we would expect her to be a cultured and competent practitioner.

It is desirable that the teacher take account of the need to keep up-to-date with good professional practice. She should also be alert, have quickness of intellect, and be ready to deal with any unexpected event. She should never think that today is just like yesterday or that tomorrow is just a continuation of today. Every day and every lesson should be different in that the teacher continually adds to it from her own developing expertise and knowledge. Therefore, the teacher herself should be always active, making progress in her craft.

*‘Continuing to pursue studies within his own subject. The teacher who stops acquiring knowledge after his graduation condemns himself to stagnation. The flow of knowledge never stops. The teacher should devote some of his knowledge to his students to bring them to the required level.’<sup>13</sup>*

Further, the teacher should not only be a scholar who knows one aspect of science and teaches it to her students, but she should also distinguish the philosophy behind the science. What happens in the classroom is not just teaching information but includes a deeper dimension encompassing the personal development of the student, that is education. Educating has a deeper and wider meaning than teaching. Therefore the teacher is required to know the aim behind teaching and its methods and has to plan that to achieve this aim.

A successful teacher examines new ideas with an open mind and criticises

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p.103.

them objectively, without compromising her religion, principles and the interest and welfare of her students and society. This attitude often opens up new possibilities for the teacher and expands her abilities. At the same time a teacher should be very careful to be selective about new ideas. Anything that does not undermine the values of the community and is beneficial is acceptable or even sought after.

A pedagogical teacher is expected to be well-informed. A teacher's interests should be wide-ranging and not be restricted to her specialism. For instance a geography teacher should not only speak about geography. One of the characteristics of this century is the extraordinary progress of science and the wide and deep development of knowledge which should be the acquaintance to some extent of all intellectuals including teachers.

A capable teacher is expected to have her own views. It has been said that

*'She should not be a slave of the subject she is teaching. She should have an opinion about what she teaches even if this means that she differs from the textbooks or the curriculum. But she should explain her ideas and support her arguments with convincing proofs, and not take up a different stance just for the sake of argument. She should be a well-read and thoughtful teacher sure of herself and her knowledge.'*<sup>14</sup>

Competent pedagogue teachers customarily possess presentation skills of a high standard. This includes the skill of presenting her lessons in an attractive manner that makes the students like the subject rather than dislike it. The teacher's language skills should be excellent, and it is advantageous if she has literary interests. The style and the method that a given teacher uses is what distinguishes her from other teachers. Many people who finished their studies long ago still remember courses which were taught by teachers who made the subject attractive. On the other hand some students have been obliged to leave a subject that they liked because they could

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<sup>14</sup> As-Shatbi, Abu-Ishaq Ibrahim bin Musa al-Lkhmi al-Gurnati, *'Almuwafiqhat fi Osool al-Ahkam (The Relations between the basis of the Divine Laws)'*, Maktabat Subaih wa-Awladuh, 1969, part one. p.51-58.

not get on with the method used by one of the teachers.

Teaching skill includes the ability to use different methodologies to avoid boredom in the classroom. A successful teacher knows how to choose the right method and style for a given lesson or even for a given time of the day. A method that is successful in the morning may not be so successful at the end of the day when the student becomes saturated with all that has happened during that day, the lessons, the events, the teachers' presentations and so on. A successful teacher can even change her style for a single student if she notices that one of the students is not following the progression of the lesson. She checks her way of presenting the material first, and monitors it by observation of her students as she progresses through the lesson. If she becomes aware that she might be making a mistake in her presentation of the material, she modifies it or tries a different approach.

Part of the previous point is that she must have the ability to control students, the classroom and other activities. A teacher who has a capable nature can act swiftly and firmly without hesitating. Not being firm may lead to a lot of problems with the students who look for any weakness in the teacher in order to misbehave. If a teacher shows any weakness it will be very difficult or perhaps impossible to recover the ground that she has lost. Some pupils will take any sign of weakness as an opportunity to misbehave and the subsequent lack of order in class will make the teacher hate her job.

However, it is an open question about how far she has to adopt a specific set of methods. Presumably some methods are derived from Islam (Qur'an, Sunnah, etc.), these are entirely acceptable. Some methods are actually derived from modern education research and practice but are not at odds with Islam and are therefore allowable. Some methods may be unislamic and therefore unacceptable.

In fact, a Muslim teacher is allowed to use all methods she may find suitable to illustrate her aims. The only limitation is that the method shall not be in conflict with the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Some educationalists identify the restriction as that

'of being *Mubah* - permissible'<sup>15</sup>. Islamic scholars has identified *Mubah* as 'what the Law-Giver has not asked to be done nor to be forbidden'<sup>16</sup>. Hereby, the teacher is allowed to use a variety of teaching methods and aids because 'The basic *Asl* [origin] refers to the permissibility of things'<sup>17</sup>.

##### 5. The teacher as nurturer of disciples

It cannot be emphasised enough that the teacher is not merely transmitting information, she is passing on a way of life. So she teaches for commitment and decision. Her purpose is Islamic formation. The methods she uses are to be evaluated not just by their success in ensuring attention, interest and recall but also by their capacity to assist the pupils' progress in the faith and obedience to Allah.

In the United Arab Emirates, the nurture of students into the Islamic way of life is a primary aim of education. All Islamic teachers work to this goal to a degree, but some are more conscientious about applying it than others. There are some teachers who feel their teaching is vocational, like the work of the prophets. Work of this sort amounts to worship. These teachers are interested in the education of the children in the school ('education' in the widest sense) and do everything they can to ensure they are taken care of in suitable ways. From my observation of teachers in the UAE, I noticed that these teachers are tireless and are constantly in pursuit of new methods of teaching. These teachers believe in and teach original Islam. They work very hard and usually are very popular with the students. The majority of these

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<sup>15</sup> Ramzi, A.H., '*Al-nazariyah al-Islamiyah fi falsafat al-Dirasat al-Ejtimaeyah at-Tarbawiyah (The Islamic Theory in the Social and Educational Philosophical Studies)*', Dar el-Thaqaafah, Al-Doha, 1984, p.263.

<sup>16</sup> Samak, M.S., '*Fan el-Tadries lil-Tarbiyah el-Islamiyah (The Art of Teaching Islam)*', 2nd edition, Maktabat Al-Englo Al-Masriiah, Qairo, 1978, p.223.

<sup>17</sup> A-Qaradawi, Y., '*The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*', American Trust Publications, USA, (no pub. year), p.14.

teachers are from the UAE. Their thoughts and their beliefs are Islamic. From my visits to the classes of such teachers, I saw many methods employed to achieve this objective, more of which given in Chapter V.

A traditional part of teaching religion in Muslim countries - giving advice - is still proving its worth today. The teacher usually does it at the end of the lesson, using excerpts from the Qur'an, or Muhammad's advice (pbuh), or that of important religious figures, or occasionally her own. For example, 'O my son, do everything God tells you and God will take care of you, and when you want to ask about something, ask your God. If you want any help, ask God. Know that if people come together to harm you, they can't if God doesn't want it. And if everyone wants to help you, they cannot, if God doesn't want it'. In this hadith the teacher uses the method of repetition, because she wants this to be permanently imprinted in the minds of her students.<sup>18</sup>

To educate pupils, the teacher will need to apply a variety of methods to arouse interest, such as making use of metaphor, simile and poetry. The teacher can make use of these during her lessons in order to make her lessons more beautiful, creative and effective. A good teacher is very well-read and cultured, and does not limit her knowledge to Islamic education. She will give children many examples to illustrate one idea, believing that some students will understand her first example, but with more and more examples, all students will understand. An example<sup>19</sup> is that of a student who has not worked hard through the year, and now, facing examination time, finds it impossible to learn everything she needs to in such a short time. Such a student is like a mean man with a donkey. He is too mean to feed the donkey and the donkey grows weak. At some point he wants to transfer goods to another village across a mountain. By now the donkey is too weak to make the journey, so, under

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<sup>18</sup> Teacher, N.M.

<sup>19</sup> Teacher, D.A.

the shadow of the mountains, the mean man tries to feed the donkey. Of course, this is useless, as he has left it too late.

The method of arousal of interest used must be carefully selected and controlled, for example, so that they are suitable for each age group. One teacher's treatment demonstrates this<sup>20</sup>. She may talk about Paradise, or life after death, approaching these topics from different angles, depending on the age of the group. With children of primary school age she may use photographs of theme parks to excite the children's imagination, and suggest the possibility that Paradise is similar or even much better. Alternatively, she may talk about the Hadith, where Abraham is in Paradise, which is represented as an enormous garden with a huge tree, where Abraham is surrounded by children. The teacher may also talk about Muhammad's childhood, telling the children that he was a very good child, liked by everyone because he did not lie or cheat. Another teacher speaking about an experience of

hers *'The teacher tries to encourage students to fast for half a day during Ramadan, offering gifts for those who can complete it. Two nine year old years in my survey managed to complete the whole of Ramadan, fasting for the entire period, and when the parents of these children told their teacher, she held a party for them to celebrate the strength of their faith.'*<sup>21</sup>

Teachers are advised to avoid excessive didacticism. Use of the traditional way of teaching where the teacher does all the speaking, organising and guiding and sees students as mere receivers and listeners of her material reduces the students' involvement to a passive role and restricts the development of the students' capabilities. This was encountered often on field research and I believe it should be replaced by a style where the teacher expects a more positive contribution from the students and acts as a listener and promoter of the students and their activities. For example, even if a student cannot express herself properly she should not be stopped

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<sup>20</sup> Teacher, S.M.

<sup>21</sup> Teacher, F.E.

and corrected before she has finished saying what she has to say.

Thus there is a place for free expression in class in order that students may develop ideas without being afraid of being criticised. On the other hand, in some instances more firmness, and even severity, may be necessary. The teacher uses fear when she wants students to reject an idea or philosophy. With older children the teacher may discuss the actions which would condemn one to Hell. The teacher may simply look at students very sternly to indicate what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. With older students the teacher may stop them coming to class or school (organising this with the head teacher) for a certain period to punish very bad behaviour, such as glue-sniffing or promiscuity. When I asked head teachers about such severe punishment, they answered that it was necessary for the punishment to remain in the students' memory, to prevent it happening again. It must be kept in mind by the teacher, however, that her role in reinforcing order differs from that of the police. Her role consists of implanting the love of order in student minds. She should inculcate good habits which will stay with them all their lives so that they will always follow order, not because they are afraid of the law but because they respect it and because their conscience and education dictate it. Nurturing honesty in students is one of the most important roles of the teacher. She can implant in her students the sense of responsibility towards their society and its importance, and, since nurturing the conscience is a most vital task of the teacher, it requires her best effort and time.

However, the teacher is not merely a reinforcer of the social mores of Islam. She does not want her pupils to accept Islam unthinkingly. She is concerned:

- (i) that they should understand what they are doing;
- (ii) that they should do it freely; and
- (iii) that her methods should be morally acceptable, ie, that they should respect the children as persons and not violate their personality.

More on these aspects follows:

Modern trends in education maintain that education is wider and deeper than

the mere acquiring of information. In Islamic understanding it cannot be defined even in terms of acquiring and practising skills or forming positive or negative attitudes. Real education lies in the integration and improvement of the skills of information, attitudes and thoughts. This combination should be communicated to the student in such a way that it becomes a part of her personality to the point that it influences her ideas and attitudes towards everything she encounters in her daily life. To clarify this point I will give an example from a personal experience: When I was a student, I came across a verse of the Qur'an that speaks about Muslim women's dress. I understood it and got a high mark in the exam. But it did not influence me to the point that I started wearing the veil. Later the same subject was presented to me but in a more persuasive way. My reaction was to wear the veil and not only merely understand the reasons for wearing it.

From this experience I would suggest that the most important factor in education is the ability of the teacher since the only different element in these two cases was the teacher. The teacher who makes the programme more lively and memorable is different from a robot-like teacher who presents a dull curriculum void of relevance. Students of my generation studied Islamic education at the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties as mere information. Lessons were memorised, but as soon as the exams were over most of the information acquired vanished from our memories.

The subject that does not affect the student's personality is far from being educative; it is no more than a corpus of superficial information which could be easily forgotten in a short period of time. As an example of effective Islamic education I would cite the case of the Prophet as a teacher and his companions as students. They came to the Prophet who taught them ten verses of the Qur'an at a time. They understood and memorized them. Then they taught them to their wives and children and applied them to their daily lives. After that they would go back to the Prophet to learn more (see Chapter III). The basis of Islamic education is, then, to apply what



is learned to life, otherwise learning for its own sake becomes void of all meaning and is worthless.

To be successful, a teacher needs to make people around her see that she stands by her principles and lives by her beliefs which are taken from the Holy Book. Consequently they will realise that she cannot be moulded to suit their needs nor persuaded to do what is wrong against her better judgement. She should explain to the students the vision that she has for the future showing them that it is possible in spite of the shortcomings of the present. When students understand this and link the ideology with the present situation and its problems, they can imitate this attitude - drawing up for themselves a plan for how their life should be.

Last but not least, the nurturing teacher, ought to encourage the development of talents in the service of God. Good teachers in the UAE seek out and look after the talents of their students, as if they were precious gems. Teachers polish their students' talents in the same way as a pure diamond might be polished, and taken care of because it is so precious. Examples of talents would be:

a. Qur'an reader.

*'When a student reads in the Qur'an reading lesson, the teacher notes down the students who are good, and she encourages them, until they are ready to be brought to the attention of the Special Qur'an Reading Teacher (one of the teaching staff). A teacher can encourage talented students by in a variety of ways such as:*

*\* Frequent praise.*

*\* Invitations to read at festivals.*

*\* Giving gifts, such as a copy or cassettes of the Qur'an.*

*\* Entering them into competitions, either within the school, or with other schools in Qur'an memorising activities.*

*There are some children who learn the Quran by heart.'*<sup>22</sup>

b. Calligraphers.

*'The teacher responsible for the Islamic group in the school is told*

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<sup>22</sup> Supervisor, A.M.

*about any students with particularly beautiful handwriting, and she encourages this talent. The students copy the words of the Qur'an, the Hadiths, or speeches, which are used to decorate the school, or are put on sale, to decorate houses. They are given all the equipment they need to write well and a comfortable atmosphere is created for them to work in.'*<sup>23</sup>

c. The Articulate Pupil.

*'When the teacher holds seminars in class, she notes who the talented students are. She takes them to the library, where they read and choose a topic to prepare a seminar for the school mosque. These students are encouraged to take part in a type of debating society, and to speak in school broadcasts, and when they can, they may lecture on a subject in school, or outside of school.'*<sup>24</sup>

d. The Leader.

Some students are particularly popular and the good teacher will notice this and harness this 'talent', making a note of the student's name and telling a teacher in the Islamic Group about them. They then join a group of *Dawah*. Special treatment includes the following strategies:

- \* Teaching how to relate politely and kindly to others.
- \* Recommending good books about the methods of *Dawah*, or choosing a good cassette and video relating to the subject.
- \* Discussing with the students which problems they wish to discuss and suggesting answers.

e. Actors and Singers.

In a school year there are many events and occasions when students are needed for performance, for instance on the school broadcasting system or even inside the classroom. Every school has a theatre group for students whom the teacher thinks are talented in these areas.

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<sup>23</sup> Teacher, N.Q.

<sup>24</sup> Teacher, F.G.

## 6. The teacher as interpreter of society

The teacher is part of the *Ummah* and is therefore part of the school-home-mosque nexus. These three areas of the child's life interact. It is important for the teacher to be in constant contact with the community in which she works since her students come from this society. In many cases, not understanding the conditions of the society in which the students live makes dealing with the students very difficult. In addition, being *au fait* with the culture of the society in which her students live, reassures parents about the school, those who work in it and what they are teaching their children. Parents are more likely to take the solutions and advice given by such teachers or at least appreciate the care they are showing their pupils. This is an important factor in the success of the school in fulfilling its duties.

*'the image of the school is determined by the relationship between the individuals of that society and the members of staff in that school. The more the society benefits from the teacher the better that image becomes. Based on this every teacher is required to understand the aims, dreams and ambitions of his society in order to reflect all these requirements in a school job which works for the benefit of the society and participates in its prosperity and development'.<sup>25</sup>*

The teacher should be very sensitive to the values of the society which control the behaviour of the people and their relationship with each other. Some societies derive their high values such as faithfulness, honesty, good-neighbourliness and respect of people's rights from religion. Others make the first aim or value in life the gathering of wealth and ways of investing it or spending it, and judge people according to what they own. This can be considered as a part of the society's culture. All this must be explored in relation to the Islamic faith. Thus the teacher is an interpreter of society. She must study society for herself, simplify it for her pupils, transmit its positive values to the pupils and warn them against its negative elements. It is well known that every society derives its culture through its history from the

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<sup>25</sup> Mursi, M.A., '*Al-Muallim wal Manahij wa Turuq at-tadris, (The Teacher, the Curriculum and Teaching Methodology)*', Ālam al-kutub, Ar-Riyyadh, 1984, p.18-19.

practices of its individuals and their struggle with nature, their environment and their neighbours and even with themselves during their progress and development. It follows that the role of the teacher and her duty is to clarify to her students the culture of the Muslim society to which they belong and point out the humane accomplishments realised by many of this society's individuals in all fields, laying more stress on what has been done in her subject particularly. She will not run out of examples since Muslims have achieved great advances in all sciences. However, when the teacher talks about values, it is necessary to reflect them and observe them herself before asking the students to comply and respect them.

The national curriculum is the foundation of education in the UAE. It is assumed to reflect the beliefs and principles of Islamic society. This foundation originates from the society which built up and equipped the school and spent money, effort and time to provide it with the best teachers, books and curricula. This society has its values, traditions and morals. In a Muslim society a sincere teacher should be aware of the importance of these values and understand all their dimensions. Not only should the teacher implant these values in the minds of her students, she should also make sure they affect their behaviour. She should not allow any student to deviate from, and deride, these values. She will not be effective if she herself does not respect and follow these values. Every teacher, no matter what subject is being taught, is required to comply with these values and principles because society has entrusted its children to her.

If some institutions in society do not fully respect the Islamic values, the school with its new teacher can correct the mistake or at least oppose the drift of corruption. Some aspects of other societies which young people encounter during their journeys abroad or when they mix with people from different cultures or gain from television may be attractive to them. This temptation may shake some of their Islamic values. The role of the teacher in this case is crucial. Increasingly, in this age, she will have to be a critic of non-Islamic values and a guardian of the pupils'

morals against the contamination which may come from outside the *Ummah* and even from within, eg non-Islamic elements in the UAE - promulgated via the media and western workers, etc. One supervisor noted that

*'This is the case in the Gulf States where travelling abroad became a new element in the culture after oil discovery. Also the mass media facilitates the acquisition, analysis and follow-up of information about all the events that take place around the student.'*<sup>26</sup>.

Another current danger is that students now have access to many books which may not comply with the purpose of proper education. Such books may harm students more than benefiting them. The role of the teacher in this case is to help her students choose the books that are relevant to them. The teacher has the role of presenting the culture of the society to the students and presenting these students to this culture. As we know, culture - the culture of the society - is not a simple matter.

The teacher will also show how Islamic principles apply in contemporary society. Politics has to be on the curriculum; the *Shariah* cannot be privatised. Muslims believe that 'Islam is suitable for every place and time'. From this, teachers in the UAE link Islamic history with Muslims today. When I visited one teacher<sup>27</sup>, her class was discussing some verses of the Qur'an. I noticed that the students felt as if these verses had just been sent from God to illuminate modern problems and ideas. The teacher spoke about work: those who like work and those who do not. She said that 'our religion always tells people to work since it is part of the religion'. She wrote 'Except such as have faith and do righteous deeds and [join together] in the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy'. After this the teacher discussed the verses and how Muslim people once worked very hard, but now some do not. She asked the question "why, with all the advantages of modern-day living such as electricity, transport etc, we should be so disinclined to work.

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<sup>26</sup> Supervisor, Y.N.

<sup>27</sup> Teacher, S.K.

Another teacher told me that:

*'On religious occasions such as Muhammad's birthday the teacher talks about this subject. She bases these lessons upon the curriculum, but may change the order to coincide with an event or festivity. For example: she may decide to talk about the Holy War (Jihad) during the period of Intifadah. On the National Day of the UAE, she may talk about the love of one's country and family through the worship of God. She may talk of national unity and tie it in with the idea of unity within the whole of the Muslim world. When problems occur in other countries the teacher talks about them choosing suitably relevant advice, not waiting a couple of days or weeks and missing the opportunity.'*<sup>28</sup>

In the Islamic point of view, it is not possible to separate education from politics. Education is a part of the general value orientation of the community i.e. a part of Islamic thought, as is political thought. This is especially so, if we realise that to a Muslim politics means taking care of and providing for the needs of the society internally and abroad, in accordance with Islamic thought and law. This requires the state to perform many tasks in different sectors of society. One of the most important of these is education. Without doubt, the state should include this in its curriculum, otherwise, it would be neglecting its duty since the purpose of its existence is the welfare of society and this clearly includes exploring political issues.

We can see from the above that the teacher has to work in a changing culture. She must have the flexibility to adapt changes to the message of Islam and present them to her students as part of the ideology she teaches. For 20th century society, changes are constant and it is impossible to find an unchanging community. The teacher who cannot cope with change and progress is a bad example for students because of her inflexibility. Thus a successful teacher is one who explains the advantages of change and its disadvantages and limits. She should be a communicator who clarifies to her students that not all change is good and shows them the positive and negative sides of change. This change in the society needs an adaptable teacher

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<sup>28</sup> Supervisor, R.K.

who would act as a 'thoughts filter' to ensure safe growth of the children.

As this chapter demonstrates, teaching religious education in a modern Islamic society such as the Emirates is not a simple job, it is a vocation which requires many skills - personal, intellectual and social. Thus the society in which she teaches has many implications for the role of the teacher. These implications not only require qualities of a high order from the teacher; she must also carefully select the methodology and content to ensure they take these implications into account. The next chapter will examine some of the methodologies of religious education in the UAE.

## Chapter V

### The Methodology of Religious Education

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with methodology, educational aids and activities that are used in foundation schools which receive children of the age group 4-15 years in the United Arab Emirates. These methods, means and activities occupy an important place in teaching because 'these are like links between the student and the programme. The methodology, in this way, includes the teaching situations that take place in the classroom that are organised by the teacher, and the approach used to fulfill that' <sup>1</sup>. Whereas Mamdūh Sulaymān defines them as 'the methods which the teacher uses to convey information to his students as he teaches' <sup>2</sup>, another author defines teaching as 'the planned procedure or procedures that the teacher follows when dealing with his students in order to make teaching easy' <sup>3</sup>. Muhib ad-Dīn Abū Ṣālih describes it as: 'The organisation of the teaching steps (skills) that can be repeated when circumstances are alike and which are intentionally aimed at the fulfillment of the teaching goals' <sup>4</sup>. Some educationists <sup>5</sup> enumerate the most

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<sup>1</sup> Mursi, M.A., '*Al-Muallim wal Manahij wa Turuq at-tadris, (The Teacher, the Curriculum and Teaching Methodology)*', Alam al-kutub, Ar-Riyadh, 1984, p.179.

<sup>2</sup> Sulayman, M.M., '*Athar idrak at-talib al-muaallim lil-hudud al-fasilah bayna taraiq wa asalib wa istratijiyat at-tadris fi tanmiyat biaah taalīmyya faalah dakhil as-saff (Student Teacher Understanding of the Boundaries Between Ways, Methods and Teaching Strategies for Development in the Class Room)*', Risalat al-khalij al-Arabi, No.24, 8<sup>th</sup> year, 1988, p.122.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Laqqani, A.H. and Radhwan, Y.A., '*Tadris al-mawad al-ejtimaiyya (Teaching Social Subjects)*', 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Alam al-Kutub, al-Qahira, 1979, p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Abu-Salih, M.A.A., '*Asasiyyat fi turuq at-tadris al-amma (Basics in General Teaching Methodologies)*', 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Dar al-Huda lin-Nashr wat-Tawzia, ar-Riyadh, 1988, p.25.



important and fundamental characteristics of methods of teaching in the following points:

1. The student must represent the centre of education, not the teacher, nor the curriculum, nor the society.
2. The process and principles of teaching should suit the student's intellectual and physical capacities and his or her ethical values. The methods and principles used to teach retarded students differ from those used with slow students, normal students and those who have exceptional intelligence.
3. Teaching aims at developing the student's intellectual and physical capabilities and their values in parallel taking into consideration their importance in the individual's life and in society. Teaching should not consider one of these capacities at the expense of the other.
4. Teaching aims at improving students' qualifications and preparing them for the present and future.
5. Teaching is an intentional activity that starts by analysing the characteristics of students and defining their capabilities and proceeds by developing the educational policies and choosing the means, activities and the subjects that suit those characteristics and their requirements.
6. Teaching starts with the abilities, expertise and characteristics that students have; then it assumes their refinement, modification, improvement and all that is needed, taking into consideration the capability of each student in learning and his or her natural speed of acquisition of knowledge.

Some teachers of education <sup>6</sup> have classified methodology into:

1. Methods with the teacher as a focus;

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<sup>5</sup> Hamdan, M.Z., '*Adawat mulahazat at-tadris (Teaching Observation Means)*', 1<sup>st</sup> edition, ad-Dar as-Saudiyya lin-Nashr wat-Tawzia, Jedda, 1984, pp.38-39.

<sup>6</sup> A group of educators, '*Al-Muaallim wat-tarbiyya (The Teacher and Nurturing)*', Ash-Sharika al-Almiyya lil-Kitab; Maktabat al-Madrasa, Dar al-Kitab al-Aalami, 1982, p.90.

2. Methods where the teacher and the student are the focus;

3. Methods in which the student is the focus;

They have also subdivided the instructional materials as follows:

1. Objects, which includes all physical things that we see in the environment such as men, animals, plants, stones, minerals rivers and so on.

2. Manufactured objects, which includes pictures, maps, toys, cassettes, film and video.

3. Purely immaterial means such as stories, proverbs, description, dialogues and drama.

Throughout the field work in the UAE, I noticed that the commonest method in the Islamic education class was based on discussion and dialogue at different levels: high level questions (i.e. intellectual and analytical), and low level, gradual, formative questions. This is to be set beside another approach, which is also based on discussion and dialogue, namely the problem method. The authors of The Teachers' Guide book for the 7<sup>th</sup> class confirmed that

*"students" minds are created with a natural love of observation and exploring causes. The desire for knowledge requires this method [discussion and dialogue] because it draws students' attention towards design and perfection in the cosmos and wonders in creation. This leads finally to strengthening the students' belief which is the ultimate aim of Islamic education'* <sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, Mr. Raqwa stressed the value of the problem method as he said,

*'This method is one of the most successful ones if it is carried out in the right way. For students react to their personal problems and to their society's and community's. If the reaction takes place, the goal will be achieved. In this technique, [two sides are required], the first side is the student and the second is the teacher and its best method is discussion and dialogue. The teacher plays the role of a controller who controls the conversation and affirms the right and corrects the wrong*

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<sup>7</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.25.

*after convincing the student'* <sup>8</sup>.

Basing my work on this observation (the importance of the method of discussion and dialogue), I subdivided the methods I gathered as follows:

a. Presentation and explanation techniques

1. Explaining an idea
2. Use of analogy - from known to unknown
3. Disclosure techniques - metaphor, simile and poetry
4. Exhortation and warning
5. Story telling

b. Discussion and questioning techniques

1. Questions leading to a pre-specified answer
2. Higher order questions and tasks
3. The specific case; the problem-centred approach

c. Independent study activity

1. Compulsory Teaching Aids
2. Non-Compulsory Teaching Aids

**a. Presentation and explanation techniques**

**1. Explaining an idea**

This is one of the techniques used in schools in the UAE in general and in Islamic education classes particularly. It may be illustrated as follows:

1.1 Explaining a technical term.

When explaining the meaning of belief in the hereafter the teacher explained the word 'belief' by quoting the following Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): 'eman is what is settled in the heart and proved in behaviour' and clarified it to the students in a more comprehensive way until they understood it.

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<sup>8</sup> Supervisor, M.R.

### 1.2 Explaining rituals such as pilgrimage.

'The teacher described the *Ka'ba* and the pilgrimage rites that pilgrims should do, such as going around the *Ka'ba*, and what pilgrims should be wearing. He clarified the point that pilgrims are supposed to wear a special dress and he described it. To visualise this, the teacher either showed a video which depicted the different rites of pilgrimage, or asked some students to wear the garments of pilgrims and perform all the rituals and go around a model of the *Ka'ba* made of wood' <sup>9</sup>.

### 1.3 Explaining global ideologies.

The teacher can ask a student to summarise an article from an Islamic specialised magazine. In my observations 'the unity of Muslims' was once chosen as a subject. The student summarised his work in order for it to be included in the school broadcast. The teacher asked a student to summarise a given book and present it to his classmates. <sup>10</sup>

### 1.4 Taking the important points from pupils; Summarising.

The teacher prepared the lesson with a list of 'Aims for this Lesson'; these aims were taken from a series of questions the teacher intended to ask the students. After this, the teacher wanted to know if the students had understood these aims, and she asked them questions to test their understanding. She took the most important points arising from the lesson, and put them on the blackboard as 'Aims'. Students were told to write them down as a conclusive summary. <sup>11</sup>

## 2. Use of analogy - from known to unknown.

This approach is used to classify obscure points that are difficult to grasp. The

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<sup>9</sup> Head supervisor of Islamic education.

<sup>10</sup> Teacher, N.Q.

<sup>11</sup> H. Teacher, Z.N.

teacher started to talk about something known to pupils, then he used that to communicate the new idea. For example, the teacher asked the students what they would do if the headteacher of the school, or the President of the country, came into the classroom and spoke. The pupils said, 'We would keep still and remain silent'. The teacher said, 'Okay now the God who created the President and the headteacher is going to speak, so keep still and remain silent. The Qur'an is our way of life and everybody should think about its meaning very deeply'.<sup>12</sup>

On another occasion the teacher asked, 'Is it necessary to see something before we can believe in it?'. The teacher demonstrated this by dropping a pen and asking the pupils why it fell down. The pupils replied: 'gravity'. The teacher answered 'You cannot see gravity, yet you believe in its existence as you have seen evidence of it. So it is with God; you cannot see Him with your eyes, but you can see the evidence of his creation, that is, the world around you - trees, animals and so on.'<sup>13</sup>

Another example: The teacher analysed why it was important to know God and to follow his guidance. She said, 'If you have bottles of varying shapes and sizes can you fit the cork of one in any of the others?'

The pupils answered, 'No, we can't'.

The teacher asked, 'Why?'

The pupils answered, 'Because the man who made them made a suitable head to fit each one of them'.

Teacher: We have three things, a computer, a car and a camera. Can I put petrol in a camera?

Students: No.

Teacher: Can we put a floppy disk in a car?

Students: No.

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<sup>12</sup> Teacher, F.A.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

Teacher: Can we put a film in a computer?

Students: No.

Teacher: Why?

Students: Because when these things were made, they had a correct way of working. This is the wrong way, and the person who made each of them knows the way to make it work better than anyone else. When we try to make it work in another way, it will stop functioning or work inefficiently.

The teacher said, 'You believe God created you and you want to know everything about this God. God says you must do some things and not other things. Do you think this is right?'

Pupils: Yes.

Teacher: Why?

The pupils concluded, 'Because God created us, and He knows what's good for us and what is bad.' <sup>14</sup>

### 3. Disclosure techniques - metaphor, simile and poetry.

In the Islamic education course of the seventh class, third year junior school, chapter 36 (*Sura Ya-Sin*) of the Qur'an is to be memorized. This chapter contains many examples which can be used to convey messages related to present life in parables, metaphor or simile.

God says:

*'Set forth to them by way of a parable, the [story of] the companions of the city. Behold, there came apostles to it. When we [first] sent to them two apostles, they rejected them: But we strengthened them with a third: they said, Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you'* <sup>15</sup>.

The teacher used a parable when teaching this verse, showing the students how

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<sup>14</sup> Teacher, N.M.

<sup>15</sup> The Qur'an, 36: 13

those people rejected the apostles sent to them, and directing them to look at what happened to them. Then she linked this story to the present time and the pupils' daily lives by convincing them that we should follow Muhammad's message (pbuh).<sup>16</sup>

The teacher read the next verses following the earlier ones and made use of what happened to the man who came from one end of the city. She analogized this instance to what might happen to a friend of theirs who would be teased when giving advice. Further, she likened the Muslim who aims to put right the society and be patient with people with a fruitful tree which is being stoned by people with rocks while it stones them back with fruits.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Exhortation and warning

This is an important method in Islamic education. The Qur'an follows this approach in many verses. For example, in chapter 85 (*Sura Buruj - The Zodiacal signs*), God Almighty says when threatening unbelievers who burnt believers:

*'Those who persecute [or draw into temptation] the believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the penalty of hell: they will have the penalty of the burning fire'* <sup>18</sup>.

In the Prophet's traditions also many types of reward and punishment are mentioned. Among these are: direct and indirect blame or praise for bad or good deeds. We might also mention here the sayings of al-Ghazali, one of the writers on forgiveness. He points out that pardoning is one of Islam's principles and that punishment is not an aim in itself:

*'In spite of enmity against Islam, this religion has forgiveness as a principle. So whoever cleanses himself from ignorance and repents to his lord, no one looks at his past. He joins the Muslim community as*

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<sup>16</sup> Teacher, M.K.

<sup>17</sup> Teacher, M.K.

<sup>18</sup> The Qur'an, 85:15

*a honourable member whose sins are forgiven to start with good deeds his new life'* <sup>19</sup>.

Specialists in Islamic education stress the use of the exhortation approach. As for the use of the warning method they maintain that care should be taken not to go to extremes. One teacher said:

*'One of the most important principles is that we should uproot all the fears students get from their families. Some parents ignorantly sow the seed of fear of Hell and the grave in the child's mind more than stressing the love of God, Paradise and reward'* <sup>20</sup>.

As for the use of fear and violence, another teacher sees that it is not an approach to lead to imitation, it is a repelling approach. The Islamic education teacher is a herald. He should not be forcing students. As the Qur'an says:

*'Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error'* <sup>21</sup>.

The teacher who ignores this truth should leave teaching' <sup>22</sup>. Another teacher mentioned that some teachers buy gifts for their students from their own salary to encourage them and make them like studying' <sup>23</sup>.

It is mentioned in The Teachers' Guide that:

*'Most parents employ, in building up their children's belief, one side of the relationship with God which is fear of his wrath and punishment. They threaten their children with Hell at the least mistake they commit. Children grow, thus, with an imbalanced relationship with God. The family, usually, is not aware of the other side of the relationship with God i.e. His love and hope for His reward. They are not reminded of God's favours on them by creating them and bestowing bounties on*

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazali, M., *'Fiqh as-Sirah (The Intelligence of [Muhammad's (PBUH)] Bibliography)'*, Dar al-Kitab al-Hadith, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 1976, p.218.

<sup>20</sup> Teacher, F.E.

<sup>21</sup> The Qur'an, 2: 256

<sup>22</sup> Teacher, A.A.

<sup>23</sup> Teacher, A.N.



them' <sup>24</sup>.

Expert teachers realise that people differ in everything. They differ in their level of intelligence and knowledge as they differ in their characters and feelings <sup>25</sup>. Also we should notice that children in this age group (4-8) do not give importance to knowing why God has created Earth, for instance. What matters to them is that Earth exists. It is the duty of the teacher to report in an attractive way that God has created Earth for them and for all mankind <sup>26</sup>.

The teachers who were studied tried for the most part to arouse students' interests in everything Islamic. They tried to teach them true Islam. They chose areas of interest carefully, ensuring they were suitable for each age group. For example, in the case of exhortation:

4.1.1 The teacher spoke about Paradise, or life after death, approaching these subjects from different angles, depending on the age of the group. With children of primary school age she used photographs of theme parks to excite the children's imagination, and suggested the possibility that Paradise was similar. Alternatively, she spoke about fruits, birds and animals in Paradise as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith <sup>27</sup>.

4.1.2 The teacher tried to encourage students to fast for half a day during Ramadan, offering gifts for those who could complete it. Two nine year old children managed to complete the whole of Ramadan, fasting for the entire period, and when the parents

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<sup>24</sup> The General Administration of Curricula and School Books, *Islamic Text Books Curricula for Elementary and Preparatory Levels*, 1987, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> Yakin, F., '*Kayfa Nadao lil-Islam (How to Call [missionary work] for Islam)*', Muaasasat ar-Risalah, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1980, p.29.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Badri, Dr.M.A., '*At-Tarbiyya al-Islamiyya fil-Marahil ath-thalatha al-ebtidwal-eadadiyya wath-thnawiyya; al-Manhaj wat-Tariqa (The Curriculum and the Method of Islamic Education in Elementary, Intermediet and Secondary School Levels)*', Dar al-Qalam, U.A.E., Dubai, 1988, pp.220-221.

<sup>27</sup> Supervisor, A.M.

of these children told their teacher, she held a party for them to celebrate the strength of their faith <sup>28</sup>.

4.1.3 Teacher F.A. said to the students 'When I was young my mother and father took me to visit Mecca to do 'Umra'. I was your age. There my father bought me a very beautiful copy of the Qur'an. This Qur'an is still with me. I love it and I cherish it. I read from it every day. Now it is 20 years old. Would you like to see it?'. She showed it to them, and started reading from it. The teacher added: 'If you read the Qur'an properly you will participate in the school competition and you will get similar gifts'<sup>29</sup>.

In the case of the method of warning the following examples were used:

4.2.1 'A teacher used fear when he wanted children to reject an idea or philosophy, such as Hell. With older children the teacher discussed the actions which would condemn one to Hell'<sup>30</sup>.

4.2.2 Teacher F.E. said, 'The teacher may simply look at students very sternly to indicate what is acceptable behaviour and what is not'<sup>31</sup>.

4.2.3 'Sometimes punishment constituted the warning. With older students the teacher may stop them coming to school for a certain period to punish very bad behaviour, such as glue-sniffing or promiscuity' <sup>32</sup>. When I asked headteachers about such severe punishment, they answered that it was necessary for the punishment to remain in the student's memory, 'to prevent it happening again'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Teacher, A.D.

<sup>29</sup> Teacher, F.A.

<sup>30</sup> Supervisor, M.R.

<sup>31</sup> Teacher, F.E.

<sup>32</sup> H. Teacher, M.Sh.

<sup>33</sup> H. Teachers, Z.N. and M.Sh.

### 5. Story telling

Story telling is one of the most successful methods in education in general. That is why educationists stress the use of this method. The head supervisor of Islamic education in UAE told me

*'we emphatically ask the teacher to give importance to the story telling technique, particularly in the early stages of schooling, since this approach attracts students' attention in a way that may not be achieved by another method.'*<sup>34</sup>

A teachers' guide<sup>35</sup> maintains that

*'[the] story telling approach is one of the most successful methods in guiding students, especially at primary school, towards moral virtues and ethics especially in the case of foundation level pupils.'*

*'Story telling can be used for different purposes. It can be used for starting or finishing a lesson. It can also be the core of the lesson as is the case in teaching Sira; the way of life of the Prophet (pbuh). In this case 'the teacher uses the story telling method as he presents the events in the Prophet's life in order to keep students awake. This depends on his ability in presenting the story and its effect on his intonations and his face. Also it depends on his ability to evoke the element of surprise or to leave what is known as the plot to the end of the story to make students eager to hear it or participate in showing it.'*<sup>36</sup>

Islamic education curricula in UAE are rich in stories from the Qur'an, Hadith and stories from the Prophet's life, the lives of his companions and their disciples and from real life contemporary stories. One of the teachers mentioned that the story does not fulfill the stated goal unless the teacher succeeds in making students feel happy

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<sup>34</sup> Private communication with the Head Supervisor.

<sup>35</sup> Abd al-Qadir, S.M., et al, *'Dalil al-Muaallim fit-Tarbiyya al-Islamiyya lis-Saff ath-thalith (Islamic Teacher Guide for the Third Class)'*, Dar al-Aziz lit-Tibaah wan-Nashr, 1989-1990, p.19.

<sup>36</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, pp.17-18.

when she tells a happy story or see sadness on their faces when the story is sad, and see students angry when the story requires anger <sup>37</sup>.

Examples of this technique follow:

5.1 The story can be narrated as in the case of presenting the life of the Prophet (pbuh):

*'The teacher told the story in an attractive voice and a lively way. Discussion and dialogues took place during the narration initiated either from the teacher or students. For instance, the teacher asked for the Prophet's name, his father's, grand father's.... Then she said, 'the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) was born in 12 Rabi' al-Awwal the year of the elephant. This is the year when God protected the Ka'ba from destruction'. Then she spoke about the circumstances in which the Prophet was born saying that he was born an orphan... During this narration questions such as 'do you love the Prophet (pbuh)?' were asked ... Then she continued talking about his upbringing by Halima as-Sa'diyya who showed so much virtue by doing so. Then the teacher asked 'why do you love the Prophet (pbuh)?' and continued the narration of the story...'* <sup>38</sup>

5.2 In addition to adopting the evocative style in narrating the Sira, the teacher asked students to abstract information about the Prophet's life from different books in the school library that dealt with that subject <sup>39</sup>. For example; There is a story about Abu Hurayra, one of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh). He is one of the narrators of Hadith. The story concentrates on Abu Hurayra's love of knowledge, and his accompaniment of the Prophet (pbuh). In this case the teacher sometimes might use the narrating technique and other times she might discuss with the students. She might ask, for instance, for examples of his asceticism and his care in teaching people. She might students ask at the end of the lesson to compile a list of the companions for whom Muhammad narrated hadith. She could show them the main

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<sup>37</sup> Teacher, F.G.

<sup>38</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.124.

<sup>39</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 4, p.30.

references in the library <sup>40</sup>.

5.3 There is another sort of story in the Qur'an <sup>41</sup> such as the elephant story:

*'Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? O did he not make their treacherous plan go astray? O and he sent against them flights of birds, O striking them with stones of baked clay. O then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw (of which the corn) has been eaten up.'*<sup>42</sup>

The teacher would read the verses of the Qur'an, then explain them using the story telling approach.

#### **b. Discussion and questioning techniques**

In the UAE discussion and dialogue are an intrinsic and central part of the teaching of religion. With this method the ideas come from the students, and the teacher acts more as a controller or mediator of the lesson. Discussion and questions are the basis of this method of teaching and may come from either the teacher or students.

A teacher said:

*'The aim of this technique is to push the student to use her mind and interact with the teaching.'*<sup>43</sup>

The student in foundation schools should have the opportunity to question, think, discuss and arrive at the specified conclusions.

*'Discussion requires students to use their intellects and conscience [they] are naturally disposed towards curiosity and observation of*

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, pp.158-159.

<sup>41</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.112.

<sup>42</sup> The Qur'an, 105:1-5.

<sup>43</sup> Teacher, A.H.

*causes, and for love of knowledge.*<sup>44</sup>

These sorts of technique are the ones used most in Islamic education lessons. This is evident from the stress on their use at all levels of schooling and in all subjects of Islamic education. Their importance is evidenced by the number of times they are mentioned in The Teachers' Guide<sup>45</sup>.

Mr. Rakwa, Supervisor of the Eastern region confirms this impression by saying

*'Discussion techniques activate pupils' minds and are far better than lecturing, which can sometimes be boring.'*

The head supervisor endorses this saying.

*'Discussion and dialogue technique is the most common teaching technique in Islamic education. It is used in the Qur'an and by the Prophet (pbuh). The verse of the Qur'an which says: 'And argue with them in ways that are best'<sup>46</sup> is an example of the use of this approach. The adoption of this method by the Prophet (pbuh) is evident from the discussions he had with his companions as stated in his tradition.'*

In the UAE the questions used in this approach may be subdivided into three categories:

1. Question sequences leading to a pre-specified answer.

*'A sequence of small questions which gradually build up understanding until the pupils arrive at the objective. These are constructional questions. This type of question is closely controlled and directed by the teacher.'*<sup>47</sup>

The teacher should not ignore the purpose behind the discussion especially when

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<sup>44</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, pp.60-61.

<sup>45</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, pp. 16,25,38,61,81, level 8, pp. 10,27,65,82,93, and level 9, pp. 41,42,60,93,94,114.

<sup>46</sup> The Qur'an, 16:125.

<sup>47</sup> H. Teacher, Z.N.

commenting on the Qur'an and Hadith. She should take special care to ensure 'logical argument using reasoning and also stimulating religious zeal. That is to say, she should mix emotion with reason without being puritanical or fanatical and without encouraging sectarianism and confessionalism'<sup>48</sup>.

The sequence of questions gradually builds up the idea in the pupil's mind as the teacher

*'goes from the easy to the difficult and from the known to the unknown, and every question leads to another until the aim is achieved. During this process the teacher should be patient.'*<sup>49</sup>

One of the writers addressing teachers, says:

*'Be careful not to ask for a prompt fruit, you are planting a palm tree not a radish and palm trees only fruit after many years of nurture.'*<sup>50</sup>

Here we will give some examples of this sort of question:

The teacher starts the lesson and says: 'You know when God created Adam and told the Angels to prostrate themselves to him. Did everybody prostrate themselves to Adam?'

Students: No.

Teacher: Who refused to prostrate themselves?

Students: Satan refused to prostrate himself.

Teacher: Why did Satan refuse?

Students: Because of his arrogance.

Teacher: How did God answer him?

Students: God was angry and cursed him.

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<sup>48</sup> Al-Hashemi, A.T., '*Turuq tadris at-tarbiyya al-islamiyya (The Teaching Methods of Islamic Subject)*', Muasasat er-Risala, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 1985, p.65.

<sup>49</sup> Teacher, A.Q.

<sup>50</sup> Nafia, A., '*Usus at-tarbiyya al-islamiyya (The Basics of Islamic Nurture)*', Matbaat Kazim, Dubai, U.A.E., (no year), p.165.

Teacher: What is Satan's situation?

Students: He asked God to let him live until the end of the world.

Teacher: Did God grant him that?

Students: Yes

Teacher: Why?

Students: To examine people, because Muslims believe we are on Earth to be tested, whether we follow a good path or a bad path. The existence of Satan means he is there to tempt people and consequently the existence of his temptation means we are constantly tested.

Teacher: Are we now Satan's enemies? Did God give us weapons?

The teacher reads the Hadith. <sup>51</sup>

Another example:

Teacher: yesterday I went to say 'Goodbye' to my neighbour Ahmed, because he is going away.

Sometimes students ask the teacher 'Where's he going'?

The teacher might ask 'Where do you think he's going'?

The students would provide some answers, but since it was *Hajj* time soon they would say 'He's going to Mecca'.

Teacher: Do you know where Mecca is?

Students: It's in Saudi Arabia

Teacher: Why do Muslims go to Mecca?

Students: Because the Holy House of God is there.

Teacher: What do they do there?

Students: They do Hajj.

The teacher asks: 'Do you know anyone who is going to Hajj too'?

A lot of students put up their hands.

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<sup>51</sup> Teacher, N.A.



The teacher asks 'Who?'

and there are various replies: 'My mother', 'My father'.. etc.

Teacher: What did they do to prepare themselves?

Students: they bought special clothes to wear, they took with them the Holy Qur'an, they repaid everything they owed, and everyone they knew came to say 'Goodbye'.

The person who is leaving asks for forgiveness from their visitors for any slight, real or imagined, forgotten or remembered that they may have done in the past.

The teacher then says 'We are going to learn what they will do there in Mecca'.<sup>52</sup>

### **The analysis method**

The analysis method is used when Islamic Belief Verses, such as the Oneness of God, the creation of the world and miracles, are taught to students. The analysis method here reduces vast concepts to smaller ones, so that students can understand them more easily.

An example: the teacher starts her lesson with an appropriate introduction such as a news report about a strike in a certain country where workers are demanding certain rights. She asks one of her students to read the news from a newspaper or other reference that she has brought to the lesson. After discussing strikes in many countries, the teacher would say to the students: 'Let us look at Islam's view on work and the status of workers in our religion'.

From this introduction the teacher deduces the title of her lesson: Islam and Work. This happens through discussion with students. The title will then be written clearly on the board.

The teacher then asks students 'Who knows a verse of the Qur'an or a Hadith that exhorts us to work?'

She listens to their answer, then, writes a subtitle on the board: 'Islam's view

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<sup>52</sup> Teacher, S.B.

on work' and a verse of the Qur'an or a Hadith from the ones the students have mentioned. This could be, 'God says: 'It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse its tracts and enjoy of the substance with which he furnishes it: but unto Him is the Resurrection'.<sup>53</sup>

The teacher asks, 'Who can remember how Moses' (pbuh) marriage took place? And what was Shu'aybs' (pbuh) condition about marrying one of his daughters to Moses?'

The teacher asks the students about some of the deeds of David and Muhammed (pbut). Then she asks about the achievements of Noah's and Idris' (pbut).

After listening to the answers, the teacher uses them to show that Islam values work highly, honours workers and does not differentiate between jobs because every worker offers a service to the society in which she lives; the farmer, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the tailor and the office worker are all offering services to their society and God will reward them in the hereafter if they perform their jobs faithfully, desiring to earn their livelihood in a respectable way and helping people.

Then the teacher asks the students: 'Will society be well balanced if everyone refuses to undertake jobs such as baking, shoemaking, cleaning because they are considered menial?'. The teacher stresses that every requirement and need of society is important and necessary and that it is not demeaning to do these jobs, but what is shameful is being jobless and exposing oneself to the disgrace of begging.

She asks her students: 'What are your feelings towards someone who does not work even if s/he can and asks for charity? And why is it pleasurable to earn one's living?'

She discusses with them the story of the poor man who did not have anything in his house apart from an old rug on which his family slept and a container they used for drinking. The Prophet (pbuh) sold his modest property and asked the man

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<sup>53</sup> The Qur'an, 67:15.

to buy an axe for chopping wood so that he might sell it and earn his living. In this way the Prophet (pbuh), found an honourable job for this poor man.

A further example of this method of teaching follows:

The lesson begins by the teacher asking the following questions and building ideas on the students response:

'Which of you prayed the morning prayer this morning? What do you have to do before prayer? What do you use for ablution? Is it permissible to use impure water for ablution? What is the water used for ablution called?'

After the question, a short discussion is encouraged and the teacher then declares the title of the lesson is 'Pure Water' and continues thus

'If you were on a beach what would you use for ablution? Is it permissible to use sea water for ablutions? How about river water? If you collect some rain water in a container will you use it for ablution? Is that permissible? If you collect some snow in a container and let it melt can you use it for ablution? Can you use spring water for ablution?'

After the students answer, the teacher confirms that water from the sea, river, rain, snow, and springs is pure and can be used for 'Wudu' ablution. Then she shows them three containers and asks some of them to taste the contents (salty water). She shows them how snow melts and asks them about the different types of water and the possibility of using them for ablution.

Then she asks:

'If you see a river covered with leaves can you use its water for ablution? If water is impregnated with the smell of a plant, can you use it for ablution?'

The teacher then concludes that if something pure melts or mixes with water, it is still considered clean and can be used for ablution, as long as the addition to the water is not decomposed material and the liquid does not take another new name.

The teacher questions the students again.

'What comes out of your finger when you are injured?'

What happens to water when it is polluted with blood?

Is it permissible to use this water for ablution?

Is it permissible to use water which is polluted with animal dung?’

Then the teacher leads the discussion saying:

‘If even a small amount of any impure matter, such as blood or dung mixes with water, this water also becomes impure and cannot be used for ablution.’ Then she asks:

‘Who has a cat at home?’

Does water become impure if a cat drinks from it?

Is it permissible to use it for ablution?’

Then the teacher concludes that water is still considered to be pure when animals have drunk from it unless the animal in question is a dog or a pig.<sup>54</sup>

## 2. Higher-order questions and tasks.

Higher-order questions differ from those explored above which are questions leading to a pre-specified answer. They differ in their complexity, and often in their abstract or philosophical nature. An example follows:

The teacher asks: ‘What is the difference between Man and animals?’

The students would reply along the following lines: ‘Man can think abstract thoughts, reason, etc. whereas animals can only think of their immediate needs.’ By questioning the teacher would elicit from this that Man thinks on a higher level.

The teacher would then point out that this advantage over animals gives Man the ability to choose. She would then pose the question ‘Do you think God leaves you to decide, or do you think he has sent people to help you choose?’

The students answer that in the past God sent Prophets to help us choose.

Teacher: ‘What did Prophets do?’

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<sup>54</sup> Teacher, S.D.

The students reply 'The Prophets talked about the various paths we have: the right path and the wrong path, and, after weighing their words, we then choose which we prefer.'

The teacher would then ask: 'After this choice in what way is Man on a higher plane than Animals?'

The students would say that there are many differences, the major one being that we have aims for our future, we have the ability to plan for future events whereas animals cannot. They live from day to day, their actions are motivated by instinct rather than thought and they exist only to eat and sleep.

The teacher would then say 'After seeing this precious gift from God, which separates us from the animals, what would you say to God?'

Students 'We would say a great big 'Thank you' to God.'<sup>55</sup>

Higher order questions can take the form of an informal test:

*'These [questions] can be in the form of an assessment of every section of the lesson. For example, if there are five sections in the lesson, there will be five questions. These questions can also form an assessment of the whole lesson. There can be one or two questions, or more, that can be answered orally or in writing.'*<sup>56</sup>

*'These questions, often, are intellectual, they push the student to think. The questions can be asked directly or indirectly.'*<sup>57</sup>

H. Abd al-Bari (supervisor) says about these sort of questions that 'They organise and confirm the information in the students mind; for the sequence of questions gradually builds up the idea and the higher-order questions inculcate it in his mind.'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Teacher, A.K.

<sup>56</sup> H. Teacher, Z.N.

<sup>57</sup> Supervisor, A.A.

<sup>58</sup> Supervisor, H.A.

Another supervisor says that 'Higher-order questions are an immediate test to make sure that an idea is implanted in the students minds.'<sup>59</sup> A.A. (Teacher) says: 'This method is the informal test during which the student does not feel that she is being tested yet the aim of assessment is nevertheless achieved. The above dialogue between teacher and class on the difference between Man and animals is an example of this method.'<sup>60</sup>

In the religious education lesson, the analysis method shows the students how to look to the Qur'an to resolve questions and dilemmas they may face in everyday life. For example the teacher wrote some verses from the Qur'an regarding parents and children on the blackboard and asked: 'Why did God put children before their parents in these verses?'

The pupils reply: 'In pre-Islamic times Arabic parents sometimes killed their children at birth, because they were afraid they couldn't feed them. In this verse it says God will give children and you food, putting children before parents, emphasizing the importance of the children and giving 'parents' a secondary position.'<sup>61</sup>

The teacher asked the pupils: 'Why do we pray at different times of the day and night'? The pupils replied: 'Because, for Muslims, praying is like having a break when we have contact with God. Also during normal working and leisure hours, we make mistakes or do things we regret. Praying so regularly gives us an opportunity to ask God forgiveness.'<sup>62</sup>

The analysis method of teaching means looking at a topic in great depth and considering problems and questions relating to it. It is especially valuable when the topic is relevant to the students' own experiences and/or 20th century life in general

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<sup>59</sup> Supervisor, F.A.

<sup>60</sup> Teacher, A.A.

<sup>61</sup> Supervisor, R.

<sup>62</sup> Teacher, A.N.

and in this case the teacher should take care to link the subject with the Qur'an. When we have new problems to resolve, we should consider how Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers solved similar problems, and we will find the solution to the new problem is similar to that of the old.<sup>63</sup>

For example: There is a Hadith from Muhammad (pbuh) which says everything which, in excess, can affect your senses, such as alcohol or drugs, must not be taken even in moderate amounts. Although there is nothing written by Muhammad (pbuh) about the new drugs such as heroin, and crack, we can take as the rule to follow that which has already been written by Him.

The example above concerns the problem of the interpretation of the words of the Qur'an in a modern day situation, such as dealing with heroin in today's society. In such a situation the Qur'an must be examined carefully to find its advice on a similar issue, for example alcohol. We can thereby apply what it says about this to a contemporary situation.<sup>64</sup>

This method looks to the Qur'an for the answer to a given question or problem in order to sustain an Islamic principle or refute something contrary to Islamic belief. It is used when discussing Islamic Belief or when talking to non-Muslims. For example, there is a verse in the the Qur'an which says if there was more than one God every rule in the World would be thrown into confusion and crushed. God says in the Holy Qur'an: *'If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both!'*<sup>65</sup>

The teacher here uses scientific questions and philosophical debate. The teacher asked students 'What are things made from?'

The students replied: 'From atoms.'

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<sup>63</sup> H. Teacher, Z.N.

<sup>64</sup> Supervisor, M.A.

<sup>65</sup> The Qur'an, 21:22.



Teacher: What are atoms made from?

Students: Neutrons, protons, and electrons.

Teacher: Do you think everything in the world is made from atoms?

Students: Yes.

The teacher then wrote this idea on the blackboard. She asked the students: 'Do you think everything in the world is moving?'

Students: Yes.

Teacher: Now everything is made from atoms and everything is moving, and everything will be destroyed, in life's cycle.

From all of these ideas we arrive at the belief that there is one God responsible for all of these things, because there are a lot of things which are common to all these things, and when things are created in the same way it follows that they have the same creator.

The teacher asked: 'Has anybody said "I have created all things in the world"?'

Students: No.

Teacher: Is there anyone who has lived forever?

Students: No.

Teacher: The God who has created everything in the world to follow a similar way of life will be worshipped by everyone and everything.<sup>66</sup>

### 3. The specific case; the problem centred approach.

It is not an overstatement to say that the problem centred approach is important in Islamic education in the UAE. This can be clearly seen in The Teachers' Guides at all levels. Pages 16, 39, 61, 81 (7th class), pages 26, 39, 65, 82 (8th class) and pages 41, 93, 60, 141 (9th class) of The Teachers' Guide deal with the discussion and questioning method. However, the Guide does follow this by stressing the

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<sup>66</sup> Teacher, A.S.



importance of the problem centred approach:

*'After becoming acquainted with the student's problems and approaching them consciously, these can be used as topics to stimulate discussion in class and thus make the students more attentive in order to find a solution to their problem.'*<sup>67</sup>

The Teachers' Guide for all levels confirms this. In the Islamic education syllabus for primary and secondary schools it is stressed that:

*'The problem centred approach is considered to be one of the most important methods of teaching. It should tackle the students' problems as well as those of society.'*<sup>68</sup>

It is confirmed in The Teachers' Guide of the seventh class that:

*'In the lessons about conduct, daily life problems should be used; because linking a lesson with reality makes it more pertinent ... [The teacher should link the problems of daily life to Islam] as there is no better alternative for solving daily life problems as can be seen from the numerous examples in it.'*<sup>69</sup>

Another teacher confirms this idea when he says

*'Analysing and studying the problems of society and finding solutions that do not conflict with Islamic principles is an obligation, since the ideal solution is God Almighty's decrees, who knows people's nature. But this should be conveyed to students in a manner suitable to their level.'*<sup>70</sup>

Concern should not be focussed entirely on the personal problems of the student and her close community, but the Muslim should consider everything which happens around. This is because she is required to have a strong personality capable of adapting to events, and to living, interacting and mixing with people. She is

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<sup>67</sup> Lecturer in the UAE University, A.N.

<sup>68</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, p.6.

<sup>69</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Teacher, T.A.

supposed to care for the community in which she belongs. Islam stresses that the one who does not care for Muslims, is not one of them. Also she should have a good relationship with others and avoid unsociability and seclusion. She should contribute to social activities, express her opinion openly and disclose and defend the truth in the house, at school, university, club, factory, farm, and everywhere without apprehension or hesitation.

In a study for developing teaching in Islamic education in the Gulf States including UAE it has been shown that

*'linking lessons with the real life events of students is one of the natural requirements that the teacher should consider when preparing Islamic education lessons. This has been approved by the majority of the members - 84%. The sample included teachers and supervisors, and in three of the states in the study the approval of using this approach was unanimous. These states are UAE, Qatar and Kuwait'.<sup>71</sup>*

The rule in exploring the problem is that:

*'The real life event should be the main topic. Then it should be tackled and solved Islamically, but the Islamic text should not be the main issue, rather it should be linked with real life. This approach is most successful in convincing students; it affects them strongly and it is attractive and demonstrates most effectively that Islam is able to solve real life problems. It requires a good teaching style and skill in introducing and guiding the topic [to achieve the desired goal - the relevance of Islamic text in everyday life].<sup>72</sup>*

Experience has shown the success of the problem centred approach and this is because:

*'Preaching, instructing, ordering and prohibiting methods are naturally*

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<sup>71</sup> Arab Bureau Of Education For The Gulf States, 'A study on the development of Islamic teaching methodology in the Arab Gulf States', Vol.1, Kuwait, 1984, p.113.

<sup>72</sup> Arab Bureau Of Education For The Gulf States, 'Concluding Report of a meeting on The Actual relation between Islamic Education and Other Curricula of the Elementary Level in the Arab Gulf States', Vol.2, Kuwait, 1987, p.249.

*ineffective and fail in making students adopt virtues and praiseworthy behaviour.*<sup>73</sup>

This is why it is imperative to improve the way the problem centred method is used in education.

At the age of primary and junior school pupils, discussion and dialogue focuses on relatively straightforward and simple aspects of behaviour and conduct. For example: obeying orders from parents, teachers and so on, minor traffic offences, throwing litter, lying and stealing, being untidy or dirty, not doing homework, etc., rather than philosophical problems and those more specifically relating to adolescence, eg promiscuity. The method for approaching these topics varies. Sometimes the teacher may use a problem as an introduction to a lesson, or the entire lesson may be based on a particular problem. The teacher uses the 'discussion and dialogue' method to arrive at a solution to a given problem with the students.

Between the ages of 10 and 15 there are other kinds of questions which are more complex than those dealt with for the under 10's. For example: social and behavioural problems, religious problems, economic problems, political problems are 'discussion and dialogue' topics. Sometimes lectures and seminars are given by the students, for example, about behaviour - students will contribute their own experiences. Alternatively, the teacher may mention at the beginning of the lesson that she has read in a newspaper of individuals who are heavy gamblers having lost their houses, cars, and everything they possess. This is a modern day problem and can be dealt with under the subject heading of economics.<sup>74</sup> In Islamic education today teachers try to work with reality rather than fantasy. Educators in the UAE believe that it is better to encourage active thought and behaviour rather than the passive acceptance of knowledge. From this students learn about life and its

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<sup>73</sup> Teacher, F.N.

<sup>74</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, pp.119-120.

problems.

### **Faith problems**

The exposition of the modern problems of Islam, such as the worship of the idols of modern time, eg materialism, status, is one of the methods used to deal with problems of faith in the religious education lesson. Incidents that have occurred in the teacher's experience or that of her friends, or gleaned from the media can be used as well as, or in combination with, the history of the period before Islam - the time of *Jahiliyya* and pagan times, past and present, of other nations.

For instance, the teacher can say: 'One of my colleagues told me that she brought a house-maid from abroad. As soon as she arrived she was left to have a rest. When my colleagues went into her room she found the maid performing special movements in front of an idol. When she asked her what she was doing, she found that the maid was worshipping the idol'.

Then the teacher asks:

'Who can tell me what is the resemblance between what this maid worships and what the Arabs used to worship at the time of *Jahiliyya*?'

The students answer that:

'Both cases are the same. Arabs used to worship idols and not God and the maid does the same thing.'<sup>75</sup>

### **Ritual problems**

The teacher starts by talking about a problem drawn from real-life, if possible an instance that students have themselves experienced or know of. She raises questions about it and suggests solutions to it and leads students to the verses of the Qur'an or Hadith that explore this matter and provide solutions. The more the

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<sup>75</sup> Teacher, L.A.

problem is related to the students the better they react towards it.

For instance, she can say,

'A young man became ill during the month of Ramadhan and could not fast. What should he have done?'

Or she can put forward the problems faced by a girl who has a boyfriend, showing the problems that may arise and the possible consequences. Then she introduces the Islamic solution to such problems by saying that

'Young people of your age need close friends to talk to them about their problems. They may get tempted by satan and bad company and may deviate from the right path set by God'.

Then the teacher starts discussing the problem with the students.<sup>76</sup>

The teacher could talk of problems within the Islamic religion, and the students, with the teacher's guidance, would look for an answer to situations, such as, what to do when you have forgotten to pray, or what a sick person should do during Ramadan.

For example: A. (student) goes to Khorfakkan (a far city), but cannot stop on the motorway to pray. When she returns home it is time for the next prayer. What does she do about the prayer she has not performed? After a lot of discussion and debate and with the teacher's prompting and guidance, the students arrive at the conclusion that a person who travels can do two prayers at the same time.<sup>77</sup>

### **Political problems**

Here the teacher would talk of problems within the Islamic religion, and the students, with the teacher's guidance, would look for an answer to situations. These can be larger issues, such as the problem of countries where religion has been banned

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<sup>76</sup> Teacher, F.S.

<sup>77</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.97.

by an atheist government, or where the prevailing culture imposes a materialistic view of life rather than a spiritual one.

I visited a teacher in a school after the Gulf War and in class she discussed with the students the problems caused by the political events. The teacher said, 'We are in the UAE and armies from countries from all over the world have come to the Gulf.' She asked the students if they thought the armies were coming for self-interest. Some students nodded, and others didn't answer, but stared at the teacher blankly. The teacher said 'we'll find out when we read this Hadith'. This surprised the students who began to listen very intently. The teacher adjusted her scarf and began to read a Hadith which speaks about contemporary Muslims. The teacher said 'The Nations of the world will descend upon Muslim countries, like people gathering to eat together from a collective bowl. The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) asked him '*Why will this happen?*' '*Will the population be small?*' Muhammed said '*No, the population will be plentiful, but without substance, like rain drops.*' He meant Muslims will be plentiful but without direction or purpose. '*And your enemy will not fear you because you espouse only the material things in life, and you love life too much and you fear death.*'<sup>78</sup>

The teacher then asked, 'Do you think these armies which destroy the earth and the sea are coming to help?'

Some students said 'They come for their own interest' and others said 'They come for two reasons: For their own benefit, and for our benefit'.

The teacher says to the students 'We shall return to your answers later' and continues, 'What's the interest of these countries in the Gulf?'

Student answers include: 'Oil, the wealth they get from importing goods to the Gulf, to convert us to their way of political thinking, and religious aims.'

The teacher said 'Now we shall return to your original answer to the question of why

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<sup>78</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, p.37.

are these countries coming to help us.' She continues, 'Why didn't other countries come to help us when we were very poor before oil was discovered? Do they go to help other, poorer, countries?' The answer was the same as to the previous question. The teacher concluded the discussion on this topic by describing how Muslims have strayed from a true Islamic path. They have become stuck at a certain point of spiritual development, from which they are unable to extricate themselves. When Muslims fail to take their religion seriously and fail to develop both spiritually and economically, other countries are needed to come to protect them. Then she presented them with the message she wants them to draw from the above - that only strong belief will lead to the civilization of a nation.

The teacher then asked questions; 'Who can tell me the situation of Muslim countries during the Middle Ages?'

One student replied: 'Muslim people were the most learned people at that time'.

Another student answered: 'At that time there were many universities and medical schools in Islamic countries'.

The teacher asks 'What about religion in that period?'

The students replied that religion was taken very seriously.

The teacher agreed and pointed out that religion and development were parallel. She then asked: 'Has anything changed? Why are Muslims in the situation they find themselves in today?'

The first student answered: 'They abandoned their religion'.

The second: 'The Muslim religion tells people to educate themselves, when they abandon religion, they abandon education, and consequently, development'.

The third student replied: 'Our religion requires people to work so that when we lose our religion, we lose civilization.'

The teacher asked students why Muslim people have not taken their religion seriously.

A student answered: 'Many Muslim people like the fancy and easy life and they

follow a materialistic path.'

Another replied 'They don't like the Holy War and they are afraid to die.'

Another said: 'Muslim people have mixed the culture of Islam with the culture and civilization of other nations, instead of taking their good aspects they take their bad'.

The teacher commented that the situation of today was like that of yesterday and the Hadith of Muhammad (pbuh) have become true. She asked the students to suggest solutions for this problem.

The first student suggested a return to the original Islamic way of life, and that people be educated to nurture Islam, and to be courageous.

Another student remarked that education must be given priority and teachers must ensure they take care of the religious development of their students.

Another student suggested that those Muslims who are divided or disunited should forget their differences and unite.

The teacher asked what students would do to help in this situation.

The first student replied: 'I will use the the Qur'an as my guide in life, and Muhammad (pbuh) as my example'.

Another replied: 'I will not be lazy and I will learn as much as I can during my lessons.'

Another student said: 'I will respect and obey my teachers and make them my example.'

A fourth: 'I will be courageous, and I will not be afraid of death.'

A fifth: 'I will help my brothers, my friends and all Muslims in the world, and I want for them everything which I want for myself'.

The teacher said 'If we do all of these things, then we will regain our place in the world'.<sup>79</sup> The discussion between the students and the teacher was very long and this represents only a summary of it.

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<sup>79</sup> Teacher, F.A.



The teachers use many such methods to teach students how to deal with problems. These include analysis, comparison and sometimes philosophical questions, and homework.

### C. Independent study and activity

This section deals with some methods and active teaching aids used by the teacher in Islamic education lessons. Two kinds of teaching aids may be identified. The first kind of teaching aid includes the text of the Qur'an, stories, textbooks, the blackboard, posters, songs and tape recordings. Methods used are the problem-centred approach, deskwork, use of topical events. The second type is not much used in Islamic education lessons. These teaching aids include: video and language laboratories and the methods include team work, simulation, drawing, model construction, singing with music, visits and excursions, the use of animate and inanimate objects, games and puppets.

One teacher said about the latter:

*'The use of these teaching aids depend on the teacher's effectiveness. A successful teacher does not wait to be shown the appropriate teaching aids.'*<sup>80</sup>

In spite of the paucity of evidence on the use of teaching aids and methods used in the UAE, it is apparent that they are expected to be used because of the emphasis put on them by the educational supervision system in the UAE. It is clear that the teacher is required to use some of the first group of techniques and teaching aids mentioned above, and is reproached if she fails to apply them. Use of the second type depends on the individual teacher's effort and enthusiasm; if she applies them she is encouraged and praised, if she does not she is not reproached. Therefore I

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<sup>80</sup>Teacher, M.K.

classified these two sets of teaching aids into compulsory and non-compulsory.

I shall clarify at which level and to what extent each of these teaching aids is used, and whether they are carried out mainly in the classroom, in the school or outside. To do this, I have drawn upon:

- my teaching experience of Islamic education.
- observations during my visits to Islamic education classes in the UAE during my field work.
- interviews with officials and teachers.

### I. Compulsory Teaching Aids

#### **i. Text of the Qur'an**

*'Copies of some parts of the holy Qur'an are distributed for students. For the 8-10 years age group, only one part is given for each class; these are parts 27 to 30 respectively. Students over eleven years of age are given copies of the whole Qur'an but only two parts are included in their curriculum.'*<sup>81</sup>

The Holy Qur'an has a great importance in Islamic education. The syllabus 'concentrates on the Qur'an and considers it the main source of the principles of Islam and its decrees. Students are asked to read some chapters and memorize others, and to understand some of the decrees and divine laws mentioned in the Qur'an. This necessitates the use of the Qur'an in every class at foundation schools'<sup>82</sup>.

The curriculum in UAE is 'linked with the educational policy of the society which is based on establishing firm belief in students, bringing them up in accordance

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<sup>81</sup> Supervisor, M.R.

<sup>82</sup> The general administration of curricula and text books, '*Manhaj al-tarbiyya al-Islamiyya lit-ta'lim al-asasi, al-marhalatan al-ebtdaiyya wal-id'dadiyya (Islamic curricula for elementary and intermediate levels)*', Ministry of Education, UAE, 2nd edition, 1987,p17.

with Qur'anic ethics and making them aware of the clear way of Islamic life' <sup>83</sup>.

We shall see how the holy Qur'an is used for all classes of Islamic education.

This is because the aim of the curriculum is:

*'to consider carefully the references from which Islamic education derives its material and make them the essential pivot in pupils' education. The curriculum takes the text of the Qur'an, the Hadith and Sunnah, and the biographies of the Prophet's companions as a fundamental basis for the elements of this education.'* <sup>84</sup>

The Holy Qur'an is employed a lot in Islamic education in UAE. It is found in:

- Recitation: The teacher shows students how to read the Qur'an properly <sup>85</sup>.
- Commentary on the Qur'an: That is, commenting on chosen verses of the Qur'an which are related to specific subjects in the textbook <sup>86</sup>.
- Belief: In lessons about matters of faith the teacher makes reference to verses of the Qur'an that concern matters such as the Oneness of God, His Sovereignty and His Worship <sup>87</sup>.
- Rituals: Texts of the Qur'an are mentioned in textbooks in sections that deal with rituals such as prayers, fasting, alms giving, and pilgrimage <sup>88</sup>.
- Conduct: Virtues such as truthfulness, faithfulness, generosity, mercy are explored using Qur'anic texts. <sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid*, p12.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid*, p15.

<sup>85</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 4, p.22.

<sup>86</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, pp.40-41.

<sup>87</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 5, p.40.

<sup>88</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, p.110.

<sup>89</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 6, p.110.

- The mode of life of the Prophet: Qur'anic texts are used to explain matters relating to the Prophet himself or to an event which happened at his time such as the battles of Uhud, Badr and Hunayn<sup>90</sup>.
- Personalities: Some Qur'anic verses are related to specific people and particular problems. These verses are discussed under these headings <sup>91</sup>.
- Extramural class activities: The teachings of the Qur'an are applied in cases such as recitation of the Qur'an for the school broadcasting service, or in the competitions of reciting and memorizing the holy Qur'an.

## ii. Problem Centred Approach as a Teaching Aid

The use of a practical problem as an introduction to a lesson in order to link it to real life: The teacher shows that there is no better alternative to Islam in solving daily life problems <sup>92</sup>. This could be done by talking about problems such as what is permissible during the fasting of the month of Ramadhan, the teacher suggests a problem to solve in order to see whether the students have grasped the idea. For instance, she can raise the problem of a woman who is pregnant or breast feeding and cannot fast, what can she do? <sup>93</sup>. The problem centred approach is considered as one of the most suitable teaching aid for lessons about rituals. An example:

*'The lesson may be about the present state of Muslims. All the lesson would be in the form of discussion of a problem which would be solved at the end of the lesson.'*<sup>94</sup>

The teacher is free to use this approach in situations where he judges that it is the

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<sup>90</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, pp.168-171.

<sup>91</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.107.

<sup>92</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.81.

<sup>93</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.29.

<sup>94</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.188.

most suitable method <sup>95</sup>.

### iii. Employing stories as a teaching aid.

The story method is used in many lessons, for example the mode of life of the Prophet (pbuh)(Sira) is told in stories to form the basis for educating students about the correct way to live. The Islamic education syllabus for foundation schools states:

*'The syllabus must make sure that the suggested method is suitable for the topic. In general, the analytical and inductive technique is most appropriate for teaching the holy Qur'an. Teaching rituals are more appropriately taught by demonstration; whilst for teaching Sira, story-telling is the most appropriate. Teaching jurisprudence requires more the problem-centred approach'.<sup>96</sup>*

The story approach is sometimes used in the commentary of the holy Qur'an. This is called 'Qur'anic stories' as in the case of the Elephant story<sup>97</sup>.

The story method as a teaching aid is also sometimes used in teaching Hadith. That is, the Hadith can be presented in the form of a story, for example, the story of the woman who was condemned to Hell because she locked up a cat without food<sup>98</sup>.

Other subjects within the area of belief or rituals also include stories from Hadith and Qur'an.

The above deals with teacher and students reading books together and discussing them in class. Another way of using stories is for students to use their unsupervised time to read books in the library. These include stories of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and other prophets (pbut), stories about the Prophet's companions (mAbpwt) or about ethics and so on. This often takes place during 'free activity'

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<sup>95</sup> Head supervisor of Islamic education.

<sup>96</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.60.

<sup>97</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.14.

<sup>98</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 4, p.89.

classes.

#### iv. Use of textbooks

The textbook is the traditional teaching aid recognised by the community and society for educating its children. Because of the important role of the textbook the Ministry of Education in the UAE attaches great importance to it by saying:

*'The curriculum textbook and its development occupies a central importance in the ministry. This is because: (a) it is through it that the characteristics that society wants to see in its children are determined, (b) scientific progress is fast and it is becoming impossible for schools to keep up-to-date because of the multitude of concepts, facts, discoveries and theories. Textbooks collect this information and present the essentials to students, (c) the textbook gives the student the opportunity for continuous self-teaching, besides the systematic school teaching. (d) since there is only time in the curriculum to give the essentials of knowledge, the student is obliged to investigate and extend her knowledge by herself or under the teacher's supervision.'*<sup>99</sup>

The textbook is used for:

##### a. Reading

The textbook is employed in reading the verses of the Qur'an and Hadiths that are included in it <sup>100</sup>. This is common to all lessons and all levels of Islamic education. The teacher first reads the verses or Hadith from the textbook, then the students read while she corrects their reading mistakes.

##### b. Preparing new lessons.

Sometimes the teacher asks students to prepare and familiarize themselves with the next lesson at home. She shows them the pages to work from. Sometimes she

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<sup>99</sup> The general administration of curricula and text books, '*Manhaj al-tarbiyya al-Islamiyya lit-ta'lim al-asasi, al-marhalatan al-ebtdaiyya wal-id'daiyya (Islamic curricula for elementary and intermediate levels)*', Ministry of Education, UAE, 2nd edition, 1987, pp.7-8.

<sup>100</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1 ,p.24 and p.132.

excludes the verses of the Qur'an for her less able student group to avoid misinterpretation and imprinting these mistakes in the students' minds<sup>101</sup>.

c. Writing in books

Sometimes students take notes in the book margin on appropriate pages<sup>102</sup>. In the low ability student groups the students are given books with pictures and observations and spaces are left under the pictures for their answers. They choose their answers from a few alternatives and write them down in the book. Such textbooks usually are also designed for the students to draw and colour in <sup>103</sup>.

d. Preparing for examinations

Revision textbooks which include all the required information, together with exercise books - on which students copy important notes from the blackboard or as the teacher dictates - are used for preparing examinations<sup>104</sup>.

e. Homework

Lessons usually end with a few questions designed to inform the teacher whether the students have grasped a comprehensive idea of the topic. The teacher may then choose a few of these questions and ask the students to answer them in their homework exercise book<sup>105</sup>.

Textbooks are given to the students from the age of 6 until the age of 18. There are twelve books. Each book is written for a class-year. Teachers also have special books which help them in using the curriculum and teaching aids and methods.

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<sup>101</sup> Teacher, Z.M.

<sup>102</sup> An observation during the field work

<sup>103</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 2, pp.162-163.

<sup>104</sup> Teacher, M.K.

<sup>105</sup> Teacher, A.N.

#### **v. Individual Written Work**

Written work involves the following three stages:

- Taking notes. The salient points of the lesson need to be recorded in the students' exercise books. The teacher either dictates them to students, or asks them to write them down themselves, or she writes them on the blackboard and asks the students to copy them. The second way helps the students learn to discern what is most relevant and encourages their skills of judgement. Part of the ability of a good teacher is deciding which method to use in any given situation or class <sup>106</sup>.
- Answering questions. The teacher assesses the aim of the lesson at the end of each section by asking questions. Sometimes, she asks for the answer to such questions in writing. The teacher asks the students to write down the answer in their Islamic education exercise book (which thereby provides them with a permanent record of the lesson) and students who finish answering the question in class can read out the answer<sup>107</sup>.
- Preparing a given topic. The teacher may ask students to prepare in writing a specific topic such as 'The Aqsa mosque: past and the present' for the next lesson<sup>108</sup>. The teacher may ask the students to write short essays<sup>109</sup> or to compare the messages of the monotheistic religions<sup>110</sup>. She may also ask the students to prepare illustrative posters about a given idea<sup>111</sup>.

All this work is designed for high ability students. Written work for children

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<sup>106</sup> Observations during class visits.

<sup>107</sup> Teacher, N.A.

<sup>108</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9 ,p.109.

<sup>109</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.18.

<sup>110</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 9, p.90.

<sup>111</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.63.



below nine years old mostly consists of : 'Answering a question in their exercise book, joining dots or writing names such as the name of the Prophet (Muhammad) (pbuh)'<sup>112</sup>.

#### **vi. Use of the blackboard**

The blackboard is widely used in all Islamic education lessons. Visiting teachers or supervisors judge the presentation (or the lack of it) of blackboard work. The Teachers' Guides for all levels stresses the proper use of the blackboard. It is one of the ten guidelines under the heading 'Teaching aids' and is recommended for use in all lessons<sup>113</sup>.

With young children, when a teacher enters the classroom, she greets the pupils, and then prepares the blackboard. Usually with slightly older children they prepare the blackboard before the teacher enters the room. Some teachers believe that it is not good to leave a classroom without cleaning the blackboard. They argue that Islam has taught us to be very clean, and why then, should we leave someone else to clean up after us<sup>114</sup>.

After cleaning the blackboard the teacher writes, top centre, 'In the name of God'. At the left hand corner she writes the date. Top right she writes the date using the Hegira (emigration) calendar which started from the date Muhammad (pbuh) emigrated from Makkah to Madina. Under 'In The Name Of God' She writes 'Islamic Nurture' under this she writes the part of Islamic Education she is teaching the class at that time. Under this she writes the title of the lesson, but sometimes she discusses the title with the students first, and taking the title from their suggestions, she then writes it on the blackboard.

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<sup>112</sup> Teacher, A.T.

<sup>113</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 5, p.22, and, level 8, pp.28,56.

<sup>114</sup> Teacher, A.A.

*'As the lesson progresses, the important and relevant ideas and questions are written down on the board. Sometimes she encourages the students to draw out the main ideas from the lesson and she writes them on the board. The students also use the blackboard to write some of their answers on it. Some teachers divide the blackboard into sections, beginning with the main title, and with discussion and dialogue bringing out the important areas and questions, using them as sub-headings. The blackboard is also used for writing test questions.'*<sup>115</sup>

In primary schools all children have their own individual blackboards. The teacher may, for example, tell the pupils to write 'God is one' upon their blackboards. When they hold them up she can correct them easily, whereas if they had written in their exercise books it would be more difficult to correct. The size of these blackboards is 30 x 40 cm<sup>116</sup>.

#### **vii. Use of Posters and Pictures**

Posters and pictures are one of the most important aids in 'getting the message across', especially to young children. The visual image often helps to bring a subject more alive in the child's mind and educationalists in the UAE stress the importance of their use. 'Islamic education curriculum includes teaching aids and maintains that they should be suitable for clarifying difficult notions, especially, in the early stages of primary school. At this level children can only comprehend the physical world, therefore, the curriculum should lead them from the creatures to the Creator and from the material world to the immaterial world'.

*'Educationalists in UAE, also point out to the necessity of 'minimizing theoretical knowledge in the curriculum, especially in the younger classes of primary schools to avoid boredom. Theoretical matters should be exposed through activities and teaching aids that allow*

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<sup>115</sup> H.teacher, M.Sh.

<sup>116</sup> Teacher, A.A.

*students to react to and understand these abstract ideas.*<sup>117</sup>

Both the above readily suggest the use of the visual image, especially for young children and students of lower ability.

In a study carried out by the Arab Office for Research in Education for the Gulf States, a special clause relating to the determination of specific teaching aids and activities that should accompany lessons of Islam was included. Despite the importance of this clause in preparing Islamic education lessons, in practice, it is not always given enough attention. Only an overall average of 58% among the member countries voted for the determination of the teaching aids and activities for preparing Islamic education lessons. This result was not expected because teaching aids and activities are required for dividing the effort between the teacher and students. Members who responded favourably to concentrating on teaching aids and activities are the teachers from Uman (79%) followed by their counterparts from the UAE (73%).<sup>118</sup>

Posters are used for:

- writing verses from the Qur'an and Hadiths<sup>119</sup>.
- clarifying the way to perform ablution and how to pray, and showing some Islamic sites such as Ghar Hira (the cave where the Prophet (pbuh) meditated and where he received his first revelation).
- showing maps on which the location of Islamic historical cities and battles are illustrated.

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<sup>117</sup> The general administration of curricula and text books, '*Manhaj al-tarbiyya al-Islamiyya lit-ta'lim al-asasi, al-marhalatan al-ebtdaiyya wal-id'daiyya (Islamic curricula for elementary and intermediate levels)*', Ministry of Education, UAE, 2nd edition, 1987, pp.13-14.

<sup>118</sup> Arab Bureau Of Education For The Gulf States, '*A study on the development of Islamic teaching methodology in the Arab Gulf States*', Vol.2, Kuwait, 1984, p.273.

<sup>119</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 3, p.23.

The teacher also uses cards on which she writes names such as the name of the Prophet, Muhammad, (pbuh), the name of his mother, Amina, or Abdullah his father's name. The teacher lifts the cards up for the students to read the words written on them<sup>120</sup>.

When I asked the head supervisor about the availability of these teaching aids, I was told that in all schools these are posters suitable for all levels in Islamic education on which verses of the Qur'an and Hadiths are written are available. Posters are also available showing how to perform ablution and how to pray, about pilgrimage and pictures of battles. However, the teachers I interviewed were unanimous in complaining about the lack of these facilities and maintained that they often had to buy them themselves, using their own money.

#### **viii. Singing Religious Songs**

Songs are part of the Islamic education programme in the UAE and time is allocated in the timetable for this. Examples of songs are: a song that mentions that Islam is a religion of deeds not words only <sup>121</sup>, and a song describing the characteristics of a Muslim child <sup>122</sup>. The teacher, then the students, read the verses and they are explained using the discussion and dialogue approach. Then, all the students sing together. The teacher asks them to memorize the song.

There are also songs for special occasions. Students are not required to memorize these. Depending on the teacher and the school, the songs may be accompanied with music for the early classes. As for the higher classes, music is rarely used, depending again on the teacher <sup>123</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.71.

<sup>121</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 5, p.50.

<sup>122</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 3, p.64.

<sup>123</sup> Observations of the researcher.

### ix. Homework

This work depends on the teacher. At the end of the lesson some teachers give their students questions to answer at home. She checks and corrects them during the next lesson. Other teachers give different types of homework. For instance, the teacher may ask students to:

- collect pictures representing some creatures and to stick them in the exercise book<sup>124</sup>.
- find out verses of the Qur'an that deal with a given topic and write them in their exercise books<sup>125</sup>.
- go to a mosque to pray. The teacher asks students to write the name of the mosque, the imam's name, which prayer was performed, which verses of the Qur'an the imam read in the first *rak'a* (prostration) and in the second and so on<sup>126</sup>.

### x. Use of Tape-Recorder

The tape-recorder is used in listening to the Qur'an in Qur'an lessons. It is also used in recording the student's reading, then replaying the tape and pointing out their reading mistakes<sup>127</sup>. It can also be used for listening to talks and religious songs in the school mosque<sup>128</sup>.

### xi. Topical Events

One of the goals of the teaching system in the UAE is giving importance to

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<sup>124</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 6, p.65.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid*, p67.

<sup>126</sup> The teachers' Guide, level 3, p.85.

<sup>127</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 5, p.65.

<sup>128</sup> An observation during the field work.

*'linking pupils with the aims of the Muslim community following the principle of Islam that makes all Muslims one community under one political body.'*<sup>129</sup>

Educationalists stress this or, rather, they stress the value of widening this field to include students' families as well as the community at large:

*'schools should give importance to religious occasions and benefit from them by organizing meetings in schools and it would be advantageous to invite teachers and officials from other institutions to participate in such activities as well as parents.'*<sup>130</sup>

Among these occasions are: the *Hijra* day (emigration of Muslims from Mecca to Madina), the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh), the two religious festivals, pilgrimage, *Ramadhan* and so on. General occasions celebrated in an Islamic way include National Day, Palestine Day, the anniversary of *Intifada*, Teacher's day, and Tree day. These occasions are celebrated at school with the participation of both teachers and students. The celebration includes: an opening speech, songs, plays and games.

The aim is to remind students of the importance of the occasion being celebrated and to draw lessons from it. This aspect is tackled inside the class and it is the most important aspect of the occasion. The head supervisor states:

*'Teachers give a special lesson about the occasion. For instance, they teach about pilgrimage when this takes place, if possible. They teach about the emigration of Muslims from Mekka to Madina at its anniversary and so on'.*

The teacher concentrates on the important meanings of the occasion and links these to the present day. For instance, just as the Prophet (pbuh) was chased from his city because of his message, many Muslims are harried for their religion today.

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<sup>129</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 5, p.112.

<sup>130</sup> Al-Hashemi, A.T., *'Turuq tadris at-tarbiyya al-islamiyya (The Teaching Methods of Islamic Subject)'*, Muasasat er-Risala, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 1985, p.452.

## II. Non-Compulsory Teaching Aids

### **i. Simulation**

Simulation can be used to make events of the past more real. For example one of the students can put on a traditional dress and jewellery. A group of girls who are also dressed in traditional clothes go around her and then walk around the spectators singing the songs traditionally sung to celebrate the event of a child memorizing the whole Qur'an. In the past, the child who memorized the whole Qur'an was driven on a horse, donkey or a camel by the teacher with his classmates around him. All the inhabitants of the village would come out to welcome and honour the reciter of the Qur'an. The ladies of the village would adorn him with roses, sweets and money and sing special songs. Nowadays students at school parties imitate this tradition<sup>131</sup>.

Another example of simulation as a teaching method: one of the students is chosen to play the role of a teacher of the Qur'an teaching children under a tree. The teacher sits in the middle of children. Like the teacher of old, the student has a long staff in her hand and in front of her is a Qur'an on a decorated stand. She reads moving her body forward and backward with the children repeating after her in imitation of the traditional way of teaching from the Qur'an. She notices the children who do not concentrate and hits them with the long staff.

### **ii. Drawing and Writing**

In the UAE pupils of 4-8 years of age colour pictures and letters. The Teachers' Guide gives importance to this method. This has been mentioned in the section on teaching aids and activities. The aim is to make pupils active participators in the learning process, and the students learn by doing rather than by sitting back and letting the teacher do all the work.

*'We tried to increase the use of discussion and questioning approach, exposing the children to teaching aids and engaging their senses; to*

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<sup>131</sup> Nurseries' supervisor, A.M.

*include practical work such as joining lines, colouring with little writing, starting with joining dots following the pupils' level of ability*<sup>132</sup>.

During my visits to schools I noticed that the teacher gave children of 4 to 6 years pictures of animate and inanimate objects for colouring. The teacher asked students to colour the living creatures that God had created. This took place during the last part of the lesson about 'God The Creator' and provided an enjoyable end to the topic <sup>133</sup>.

For the 6 to 8 year age groups, their activity books include pictures under which captions like 'Colour the elephant refusing to move towards the *Ka'ba* and the birds throwing stones', are written. There are other activities such as joining dots to write 'Allah' (God) and 'Muhammad'(pbuh).

At higher levels, activities described above are not included, although some teachers use the writing part. '[To] encourage students with neat handwriting to write verses of Qur'an, Hadiths, maxims, and advice to decorate the school'<sup>134</sup>. Sometimes students write verses of the Qur'an or Hadith and draw plants, flowers and other objects relating to the writing. For instance, a palm tree can be drawn and the Hadith which says: 'The believer is like a palm tree...' can be written under the picture. They could also draw a hand lifted up and write 'God is great' or anything that is appropriate to the picture. Horses, birds, beehives, and so on can all be drawn and used to illustrate excerpts from the Qur'an or Hadith. Students can use drawings to describe religious stories such as the torture of Bilal. Bilal was one of the Prophet's companions who was tortured by Quraysh by putting a heavy rock on his chest under the burning sun of Arabia to make him leave Islam. Drawing men and

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<sup>132</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.10.

<sup>133</sup> Teacher, F.S.

<sup>134</sup> Teacher, Z.M.



animals is rare<sup>135</sup>.

### iii. Group work

Group work is important in teaching - playing in groups, singing, taking excursions, and other group activities require children to relate well to each other, working together, with each one of them fulfilling a specific duty often linked to other work fulfilled by other children, to teach them teamwork, leadership, responsibility, etc. In this way

*'the teacher's role becomes more important than the family's and this is one of the most important characteristics of educating today's children.'*<sup>136</sup>

Teachers of Islamic education in the UAE give importance to this type of activity, but, in my opinion, not as much as required. In the schools I visited and during observation of the lessons of 30 teachers, I have not seen these activities despite the fact that the Teachers Guide recommends group work and suggests some types to use:

- The Guide recommends forming Qur'an and Hadith groups whose tasks would be memorizing, writing stickers posters and so on<sup>137</sup>.
  - fasting and breaking the fast together at school<sup>138</sup>.
  - organising seminars where every group can present and discuss its ideas<sup>139</sup>.
- One of the teachers I met talked about a kind of group work she had used.

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<sup>135</sup> Teacher, F.G.

<sup>136</sup> Yunus, A. *'Al-lugha al-'arabiyya wa-Din al-Islami fi riyad al-atfal wal-madrassa al-ebtidaiyya (The Arabic Language Subject and the Islamic Education Subject in Nursery Level)'*, Dar ath-Thaqafa lit-Tiba'a wan-Nashr, 1984, p322.

<sup>137</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 7, p.18.

<sup>138</sup> ibid, p39.

<sup>139</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 8, p.33.

The teacher divided the class into groups where one member would talk about his/her problems, another student would talk about the first student's problem, the third offer a solution, the fourth talk about this problem in another country, and the fifth about the solution of the problem in that country. After this the teacher attempted to find a solution to the problem with the help of the class. For example, the teacher asked 'who can give me the solution to this problem?' The seminar group would write down their individual solutions, and then in discussion, try to find the best solution together as a group<sup>140</sup>.

Taking students to camps is another example of Group Work. Some of the teachers of Islamic education and supervisors I met had organised a camp. Before the event they planned it, calling it 'Brothers in Faith'. There were six teachers, the headteacher and 5 others and there were 6 groups, each headed by a teacher. The first of these groups was a working group which performed manual and craft work; the second was a drawing and painting group; the third a singing group, the fourth was in charge of keeping order and the fifth was the spiritual group. The leader of the whole camp was the headteacher. The Islamic teachers in this school had a good relationship with the other teachers, some of whom came to help with the event. The sports teacher (Physical Education), art teacher and domestic science teacher as well as the librarian participated in the event, which took place on Friday, the holy day.

Everyone arrived in the morning, and the bell was rung. The fifth group organised the students into lines. Afterwards some verses of the Qur'an were read and the students were given a talk about relationships. There were 50 students in 5 groups and the students chose which group they wanted to be in. The programme for the day was put on the wall. The timetable began at 7 or 7.30 am with greetings and from 7.30 to 11 am every group worked separately. From 11-12 they rested and from 12 to 12.30 they discussed faith. After this there was prayer (*Al-Zuhur*) after which they

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<sup>140</sup> Teacher, A.Q.

returned to work from 1.30 to 2 pm. Lunch was taken and the students then finished their work by 3 pm.

After this there was a lecture about Muslims in other countries, and the relationship between them and Emirate Muslims. From 4 to 5 pm an exhibition hall was open which contained student work from that day's activities. From 5 to 7 the festivities drew the day to a close.

The work of the individual groups was as follows:

Group 1 (Manual/Crafts Group): They made hair ribbons, marmalade, and pickled food; they made a small mosque from wood and created a Golden Dome and helped the teachers make the lunch for the other groups.

Group 2 (Handwriting, Drawing Group): They made posters illustrating the theme of the day, 'Brothers in Faith', and discussed Muslims in other countries and their problems. They distributed poetry about the topic.

Group 3 (Singing Group): This group prepared the programme for the day, as well as the final party. The programme contained hymns, songs, plays and games and the group distributed small prizes to the best students from each group.

Group 4 (Order Group): This group took care of law and order and reminded people of the Islamic rules about living together. They also answered the telephone for the camp.

Group 5 (Spiritual Group): They prepared everything necessary for prayer, and lectured and talked to the other groups encouraging them to work, saying that was a form of worship. They prepared parties and gave everyone a 'Thank You' card. After the final party every teacher accompanied a bus of students returning them to their homes.

It should be noted that in every school there are curricular groups, which are for each subject, such as the Arabic language group, the English group, the Mathematics group etc. The Islamic Education group is usually popular, because in this group they are encouraged to do interesting work. The work of the Islamic

Education Group can be broken down into the following activities

- a. The group reads the Qur'an and learns it by heart. Groups may compete with each other to learn the Qur'an, and there are national competitions for this activity. The groups also read the Qur'an in school broadcasts.
- b. Theatre and Choir Group. This group prepares parties and school broadcasts and receives visitors. They perform historical Islamic plays. Using the vehicle of drama, they advise students about many things, such as smoking and praying. All of this takes place in the theatre.
- c. The Islamic Press Group. This group undertakes handwriting verses of the Qur'an or of the Prophet's Hadith. They write well and display their work. They sometimes write advice and publish school newspapers, magazines or posters.
- d. Advice Group. This group tries to persuade students to behave in a way fitting to the Muslim way of life. For example, in girls schools they try to persuade students to wear the veil, in boys schools they exhort students to stop smoking.
- e. Public Speaking and Seminar Group. This group encourages students to speak in public. They visit the library to collect information and they use it in their public speaking. Everyone from this group has a teacher in charge of them, who does not tell them what to do, but merely controls discipline. The school gives this group 20 minutes every two weeks of school time to work on the latest topic. However, very enthusiastic groups work at every opportunity. Some of these groups are like a beehive, everyone working together; other groups are like the beehive, without the bees!

#### **iv. Construction of Models.**

In every class in primary schools there is a small model of a mosque. There are many small models of the Holy House of God and the Mosque of Jerusalem. One supervisor told me that he watched a teacher talking about the holy visit to Mecca. The teacher had made a model of the *Ka'ba* from wood, with the students, and they

wore special clothes to worship in. The supervisor told me that this was the best lesson he had ever seen. Afterwards when he asked students some questions they answered all the questions as if they had visited Mecca themselves. They all usually get a carpenter to prepare the model. I saw models of the pillars of Islam and a model illustrating the Islamic Faith, another model illustrating Prayer and *Wudu*, and the Canon of *Ramadan*. There are models such as Noah's ark (pbuh) <sup>141</sup>.

#### v. Educational Outings

Visits are one of the most important teaching aids and one that may stay in pupils' memories for ever.

*'Visiting social institutions may be one of the factors that strengthens faith, develops virtues and gives students an idea about what happens in their society. Therefore, the Islamic education teacher should take her students to visit Islamic Sites such as mosques, historical places and Islamic Institutions available in the country and abroad.'*<sup>142</sup>

The Islamic education curriculum includes excursions and gives them importance. For older students, the initiative is left to teachers themselves and they may, or may not choose to take their students on visits but for the younger students (4 to 10 age group) trips are almost obligatory<sup>143</sup>. Such outings may be classified as follows:

##### a. Educational Visits.

These are trips which are based on the curriculum at nursery and primary school. For example, there are areas of interest within the curriculum, such as the sea. When this topic is being taught the teacher takes all the class on a school bus to

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<sup>141</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 2, pp.120-121.

<sup>142</sup> Mujawir, M.S., '*Al-tarbia Al-Islamiyya wa taqniyat at-tarbawiyya (Islamic subject and the educational techniques)*', Dar al-Qalam, Kuwait, 1982, p152.

<sup>143</sup> Supervisor, H.A.

the seaside. Here she tells them what is in the sea, what is outside of it, and who created it. Afterwards she would take the students to a shop selling fish, and show them the many different types of fish. She would talk about how fish feed and breathe. She would also talk about boats and ships, and how God gave Man the intelligence to build them<sup>144</sup>. For another lesson she may take them to the desert to see the sand, camels, goats etc. They may visit Bedouin Camps, sometimes taking gifts for them<sup>145</sup>. Although these activities relate to biology, geology etc. they are also constantly related back to Islam, to Muhammad and the Prophets (pbut) and the Qur'an, and thereby used as a way of increasing the students' faith.

Another example would be visits to Mosques near to the nursery or school. A time when no one is praying is always chosen. The class is shown around by the Imam, and he teaches them about the call to prayer, and then answers their questions. If it is a class of boys and the teacher is male, they may stay until it is time to pray, and pray there<sup>146</sup>. Sometimes trips are organised to fairs which show everything relating to the Islamic faith, books, cassettes, clothes and so on. Food is often sold at such fairs and the money goes to charity. This type of activity takes place many times a year in the UAE.

There are also lectures and seminars outside the school, and students are taken there by the teacher<sup>147</sup>. There are also trips to the holy places for performing the minor pilgrimage (*'umra*) organized by the Ministry of Education. Usually, only successful students are sent on these trips <sup>148</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> Teacher, L.A.

<sup>145</sup> Teacher, F.T.

<sup>146</sup> Supervisor, A.M.

<sup>147</sup> H. teacher, M.Sh.

<sup>148</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 3, p.166.

## b. Contemplation trips.

The teacher takes students to a mountainous place and, after a short discussion about the creation of mountains and their components, tells them to think about the greatness of God who created these mountains and asks each one of them to express her feelings. Older students are taken to visit, for example, dairy and honey factories to acknowledge the greatness of God's creation.

## c. Receiving Visitors.

An outsider's visit to a school may have the same impact and value for the students as an excursion:

*'Society is full of Muslim people with good ideas. These people have their social and religious status and their discussions with students may be effective. The school should invite such people to talk to the children'*<sup>149</sup>.

Among such visitors could be parents. The Islamic Education teacher sometimes asks parents to come into school to talk about what parents do for their children. In these lessons they discuss what children will do for their parents<sup>150</sup>. Sometimes a teacher might ask parents who have just returned from Mecca to explain what they did there. The children are encouraged to ask questions and they do<sup>151</sup>.

A further type of excursion could be visiting other classes or schools. Exchange visits are arranged between teachers and classes to get new ideas for lessons and methods. The host school puts on a little show, with songs or a play. The two schools exchange gifts<sup>152</sup>.

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<sup>149</sup> Mujawir, M.S., '*Al-tarbia Al-Islamiyya wa taqniyat at-tarbawiyya (Islamic subject and the educational techniques)*', Dar al-Qalam, Kuwait, 1982, p153.

<sup>150</sup> Nursery Teacher Guide Book.

<sup>151</sup> Supervisor, A.M.

<sup>152</sup> Teacher, F.T.

**vi. Use of animate and inanimate objects.**

For the success of Islamic education lessons, teachers are keen on using this type of teaching aid, particularly for the first years of foundation schools. Their use is stressed by supervisors, educationalists, and the teachers themselves. I noticed this during my field work.

**a. Animals**

Teachers use a variety of animals for illustration. Small animals such as rabbits and pigeons are brought to classrooms. Other animals such as bees and domestic animals are to be seen in their natural environment. Large wild animals can be seen in zoos. These animals are used to show children the greatness of 'God The Creator'. By observing animals students can appreciate the perfection of His art. This material is used in matters relating to belief.

When I visited one teacher, the title of the lesson she was taking was 'God Created Everything'. During the lesson she brought out a large box, asking 'What's inside it?' There were many different answers from the children and their interest was caught. She opened the box very carefully and put her hand inside. She said 'in the name of God' and brought out a small black rabbit. She asked the students who created the rabbit. After demonstrating the perfection of God's skill as the Creator, she linked this with a science lesson, asking about the rabbit's fur and furthering the students' knowledge of anatomy, etc. She also connected it with mathematics, asking how many eyes and ears it had. She said 'The rabbit is very nice, isn't it? What does it eat?' Eventually she returned the rabbit to the box and said 'It is saying 'goodbye to you''. Then she took a pigeon out of the same box and continued the lesson on God the Creator<sup>153</sup>.

Teachers may take students to visit zoos to see and study animals, their

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<sup>153</sup> Teacher, F.S.



colours, shapes sizes etc. They visit gardens and farms, and when they eat something on the farm, they are taught how to prepare the food properly and to say 'In the name of God'. They collect objects, such as leaves, and flowers to make decorations. This is connected with the Qur'an where animals such as horses, cows, dogs are used often, they appear in stories and comparisons. Some verses talk about plants and trees particularly when talking about Paradise, and the teacher refers to Paradise when they are in a beautiful garden<sup>154</sup>. As we have seen, teachers use plants for the same purpose as animals in lessons of belief.

b. Use of Inanimate objects as a teaching aid

Inanimate objects used to explore the nature of God and belief include buildings and institutions. Examples are visits to mosques, visiting Islamic centres of *da'wa*, and visiting honey and dairy factories. Students learn from these visits, for instance, how to pray in mosques; they discuss Islamic *da'wa* activities in the centres they visit, thinking about God's creations. When they visit factories the activities they observe can be used to show how God guides Man towards knowledge and scientific progress.

Text books suggest a number of ways of clarifying abstract ideas. These are some examples of the methods specified:

- eating at school to practice the theory of good manners at table<sup>155</sup>.
- using water for practising the right way to drink
- using toothbrush and paste, nail clippers, etc., for teaching the students about cleanliness<sup>156</sup>.
- using jugs of water to learn how to perform ablutions;

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<sup>154</sup> Supervisor, F.K.

<sup>155</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 1, p.74.

<sup>156</sup> The Teachers' Guide, level 2, pp.87-90.

- use of prayer rugs<sup>157</sup>.

When the teacher uses difficult words that are not commonly used and the students are not familiar with them, she brings to the class an object which explains it. For instance, in the story of the elephant, the Holy Qur'an mentions a word '*asf*' which means dry hay, so the teacher brings some hay to show to students<sup>158</sup>.

The above are used more during the early stages of primary school; in classes of older children, the use of these objects is reduced. The use of such objects in class largely depends upon the teacher's initiative.

### vii. Games.

Playing may be defined as:

*'The practice of an activity in which all the aspects of an individual participates: the whole personality, physical, spiritual, intellectual, temperamental and social. Therefore, playing is the comprehensive and harmonious activity that satisfies the needs of the individual and fulfills his or her motivations. It is one of the most important aspects of childhood because it is the most truthful means of expressing the child's state and development.'*<sup>159</sup>

Playing

*'Helps the development of the different parts of the body especially the nervous system. This is because not all parts of the body develop at the same rate and some are only partly developed at birth. If one of the parts of the body is prevented from performing its job, its development may stop. For instance, if an animal is stopped from seeing immediately after its birth, if it is examined afterwards it will be noticed that the optic nervous cells stopped developing because they only progress and act if sight is used.'*<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *ibid*, p 99.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid*, p 121.

<sup>159</sup> Abdul-Rahim, A. '*Quwa'id at-tarbiyya wat-tadris fil-hazana wa riyaz al-atfal (The Nurturing and Teaching Basics in Nursury Level)*', 2nd edition, 1985, p 255.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid*, p 256.

Since 'All Islamic rituals must be performed in a perfect and correct way' if the body is weak it may not be able to perform the rituals satisfactorily. Prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving require a body that can endure hard work and can endure the struggle essential to earn 'the necessary livelihood'<sup>161</sup>. This is why it is imperative that Islamic educationalists should give playing its due importance, particularly, as Islam stresses its importance - Omar (mAbpwh) recommended teaching children swimming, shooting and riding. The Prophet (pbuh) allowed girls to come to play with Aisha because he appreciated that children need to play to develop. During my field work I noticed the lack of interest in such activities. The reason might be, as mentioned by one of the teachers that the holiness of Islamic education makes teachers regard the activities they do with the children very seriously and playing may be regarded by them as too frivolous an activity<sup>162</sup>. However, constructive play is a useful part of the syllabus as long as it is well organized and beneficial. Among the few examples seen by the researcher of playing games - all of which all may be classified as competitive - were:

- Writing questions on balloons in two different colours and dividing students into two groups. The two sets of balloons were tied to the students feet. Each group tried to burst the other group's balloons and when they succeeded, found that the balloon contained a question. When a balloon was burst, the leader of the group rang a bell, all the students stopped and both groups tried to answer the question. The game continued until the prescribed time for it to end.
- Students were divided into two groups. The two groups answered questions in turn until all questions were answered.

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<sup>161</sup> Nafia, A., '*Usus at-tarbiyya al-islamiyya (The basics of Islamic nurture)*', Matbaat Kazim, Dubai, U.A.E., (no year), p.125.

<sup>162</sup> Teacher, A.N.

- For younger pupils the competition can be in the form of finding out the differences between two pictures that look the same.

These competitions are very limited and take place outside the classroom i.e. in 'free activity' time.

*'There are competitions which are more serious and more important. These include competitions in memorizing the Qur'an. This first takes place at school where the part to be memorized is specified. After testing students they can participate in more important competitions. The winners will be honoured.'*<sup>163</sup>

#### viii. Use of puppets.

The use of puppets as a teaching aid is very limited in Islamic education. I saw only one example - in a lesson about truthfulness in a nursery. The teacher put her hands inside the puppets and started talking as if a dialogue (in this case about truthfulness) was taking place between the two puppets. The first puppet lied by saying: 'Come and help me. I feel as if an insect is in my clothes and it is biting me'. The other puppet came to help her but found out that she was telling lies. Later the first puppet was actually bitten but the other puppet would not help her because she thought she was still telling lies. This second puppet then talked to the one who lied about truthfulness<sup>164</sup>.

#### ix. Use of Video and language laboratory.

In most schools in the UAE video-T.Vs are available. Also there are many well equipped language laboratories. Nevertheless, in my visits many teachers mentioned that these laboratories are not used; either because they are out of order, or there is no-one to show teachers how to use them, or there is not enough time as a result of the very full curriculum for this sort of activity.

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<sup>163</sup> Suervisor, M.R.

<sup>164</sup> Teacher, F.T.

*'The language laboratory is used for teaching the Qur'an recitation. Students listen to the correct recitation of the teacher, then they read and record their voices and listen to their readings.'*<sup>165</sup>

The head supervisor claimed that the ministry provide documentary records of pilgrimage, prayer and the like on video, but teachers I met maintained that 'No video cassettes are available'. During visits to some schools, I found that some zealous teachers allocated time for showing documentaries to students that they had themselves had brought on videos to school.<sup>166</sup>

In conclusion, the variety of teaching aids used in the UAE is encouraging. Both traditional aids like the blackboard and textbook are usefully utilised and supplemented by more modern ones, such as videos, to provide interest. This provides a comprehensive system of education. One educationalist confirms the importance of this system not only to the students but to society as a whole by saying: 'Tell me about its [the quality of a society's] education system, I will tell you of its future'<sup>167</sup>.

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<sup>165</sup> Head supervisor of Islamic education.

<sup>166</sup> Teacher, M.K.

<sup>167</sup> Arab Bureau Of Education For The Gulf States, '*Dawr at-tarbiyya al-islamiyya al-hazariyya fi muwajahet at tahaddiyyat wal-ghazw al-hazari (The role of civilized Islamic education towards materialism)*', 1985, Maskat, 1987, p.85.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### Conclusion

##### **Different understandings of the nature of religious education.**

The object of Islamic education is to prepare pupils to face life outside school. So, its teaching methodology should aim to achieve this objective. Its emphasis should be on quality not quantity. In fact it is, I think, arguable that it is better for a Muslim to know less, as long as she applies what she does know in her life. This framework is clear from what has been discussed in Chapters II and III. However, from the work I have done, it became clear to me that nowadays different understandings of religious education can be identified. These notions are: Religious Education as custom and habit; Religious Education as academic knowledge; and Religious Education as part of nurture.

##### 1. Religious Education as custom and habit

The first understanding of religious education comes as a result of being born in a Muslim family, bearing names such as Mohammad, Abdullah, Fatima, or Aisha. This is not a matter of choice of the student but an 'accident of birth'. Such a student might perform religious activities from an early age without really understanding the meaning behind them. Religious education may mean no more than inculcating automatic acceptance of what exists in his or her environment or, we might even call it worship by habit.

##### 2. Religious Education as academic knowledge

Religious education may be construed as academic knowledge. Usually called Islamic knowledge, this covers what is allowed or prohibited, rules of worship and the implications of lifestyle for religious belief. This is the most common way of

treating the subject in our schools today. It is tackled in blocks or modules, for instance - Interpretation, Belief, Characteristics of an Islamic Lifestyle, Biography, and the latest addition - Secondary Sources. The topics are usually disseminated to students in the form of absolutes or abstract concepts. This is a valid understanding of religious education but the danger is that the information is absorbed as theory without relevance to the students' own lives and consequently, after the examinations, the material is forgotten.

### 3. Religious Education as part of nurture

Religion as part of the nurturing or formative experience during childhood and adolescence is an approach in which Islam is part of everything in life, a comprehensive system by which to live, embracing all the emotional and physical everyday events within Islamic principles and values. Its aims are to endow the students with values, balanced personalities and caring natures, as well as to enlighten them as to the nature of Islam, its qualities and its ability to help them face the problems and changes they will meet in life, and to point the way to positive alternatives and solutions in any given situation.

The latter understanding alone constitutes a complete and adequate conception of religious education. On my field work, I noticed the existence of all three understandings. It is more likely that the second understanding predominates the others in the UAE schools. Nevertheless, this latter view needs further justification. However, the single most important factor in ensuring that religious education takes the form of nurture is undoubtedly the teacher's own personal grasp of and commitment to her approach.

### **Different emphases in the application of teaching strategies.**

When considering the methods observed in classes of Islamic education in the UAE (Chapter V) and comparing them with the methods found in the Qur'an and

Mohammad's (pbuh) life (chapter III), I found some similarity between the two methodologies. Muhammad's (pbuh) approach was aimed at creating perfect Muslims as models for others in his world and for future times, while in the UAE today, in general, the approach is a mixture of disseminating facts and presenting general attitudes present in Islam. This variation influences the application of, and the discipline behind, the methodologies used.

Schools in the UAE are modern in outlook; this is clearly seen from their buildings, the systems by which they operate and teaching aids available for teachers. Religious Education methodology in the UAE combines a mixture of modern teaching methods and aids applied in teaching other subjects and ones accumulated over the years from Muhammad (pbuh), his companions and followers. Some teachers might not have a clear or integrated understanding of the Islamic ideology and this would lead to misapplication of methodologies.

On closely studying these methods, I found that presentation and explanation are found in both the traditional Islamic teaching methods and those current in the Emirates today. Typically, the story-telling technique is applied by Islamic teachers in the UAE as it was applied by Mohammad (pbuh) and in the Holy Qur'an. Nevertheless, the attention given to the sources of the material presented varies widely, as does the effectiveness of the teaching approach. This variance is closely linked to the power of the authority, ie Mohammad is an ultimate authority.

Muhammad (pbuh) was a living example who taught by his actions as well as his words, living with his students (companions) and guiding them continually. He himself provided them with the perfect example upon which to model themselves. Hence, the situations which arose and which formed the basis of his instruction to them were naturally-occurring incidents (ie not deliberately contrived by the teacher himself). Not so the classroom teacher who has to create a teaching environment and to fabricate cases to be used as examples. To create such cases in a natural and acceptable form is difficult.



Added to this, the teacher labours under a disadvantage when compared with Muhammad (pbuh). Muhammad's (pbuh) personality was ideal for teaching; he could take in difficult situations and seized upon them to teach principles to his students. He did not get angry, nor misjudge students, etc. He was a human being who was guided by Allah (swt), and even his mistakes, which were very few, were there for illustrative purposes. The teacher today is a normal person with all the human failings that entails and thus labours under a disadvantage in comparison with Muhammad (pbuh).

In the early days of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah were the only sources of guidance so Muslims modelled themselves on these and thus lived the lives of pure Islam. Since then Islamic nurture has been influenced by other ideologies and by materialism. Other subjects and teaching methods may also have an undesirable effect on students' understanding of the faith, for example, a physics teacher might teach students about earth movement creating mountains, how environmental changes occurred, etc., and this can lead a student to believe these phenomena occurred by accident, etc, and might, in certain cases, lead them to doubt that God created all things in nature.

#### The position with regard to current teaching methodology within the framework of Islam

In the following section we will discuss the place of Islamic teaching methodology in the UAE (Chapters IV and V) in the context of the Islamic faith (Chapter II and III) as a whole. The Holy Qur'an, the authoritative book, has its own methodology and together with Muhammad's Sunnah, we can identify a model of teaching with its own unique characteristics.

There is no conflict between what is used by educators in the UAE and the general aims of Islam and its methodologies. However, I could find little similarity between them.

Methods collected from my observations in the UAE have been classified in Chapter V into the following groups:

- (a) Presentation and Explanation Techniques
- (b) Discussion and Questioning Techniques
- (c) Independent Study and Activity

It is clear that such classification is mainly related to emotional and intellectual activity.

- (a) Presentation and Explanation Techniques and their relation to Islamic ideology and the methodology of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Islamic ideology identifies humans as both physical and spiritual in nature, a special creation, close to God, formed by God's hands and acting as His vice-regent on earth. This, which brings with it free choice and responsibility, should be stressed and the students should be given the opportunity to make decisions and to assume responsibility. A teaching approach should be adopted which encourages students to acquire these traits in classwork.

The Qur'an presents its message by description, exhortation, warnings, telling stories, using metaphors, similes and poetry and develops the understanding of the reader by analogies and by step-by-step instruction - from the known to the unknown. The content and language have beauty, inspire imagination, and lead the reader deeper into a subject. An example of this is its description of paradise which is presented in such a way as to make the reader see it, feel it and live within it. I did not see this method emulated often in my observations.

Muhammad (pbuh) also used the examples around him to give his companions an understanding of the things they could not see, eg God, the hereafter. When asked by a companion about seeing God in the hereafter, he did not reply with a straightforward explanation but moved them from the known to the unknown - he waited till the full moon rose that night and asked his companions : *'do you see the*

*moon?*' They answered: 'yes'. Muhammad (pbuh) said: '*you'll see your God in such a clear light as you see the moon now*'. Here he put their imagination to work to strengthen their belief in what they could not see with their eyes. Chapter III examines Mohammad's methods in greater detail.

I noticed in the UAE that the type of methodology used does not always give the pupils an understanding of the case under study. For instance, the teacher might draw an imaginary view of Hell, describing its situation and giving her own interpretation of it. This can lead to a direct acceptance of her perception of Hell by the pupils whereas it would be more effective to allow the pupils to discuss the subject, develop their own views and share them in conversation with the class.

The same applies to the story method. Some teachers tell stories in an emotionless way. It is more effective to use voice intonation, physical movement and demonstrate emotions in telling the stories and presenting the moral of them. For example, happiness, pain, cold, war, can all be acted out to make the story come to life, catch students' interest, and help the students understand it.

(b) Discussion and questioning techniques and their relation to Islamic ideology and the methodology of the Qur'an and Muhammad (pbuh).

Chapter V examined three methods of (b): question sequences leading to pre-specified answers, higher order questions and tasks, and the problem-centred approach. In the UAE question and discussion was found to be the most common technique used. Questions were usually from the teacher to the student, and students rarely asked questions. The style leads to passive rather than active involvement by the students in the lesson.

In observation sometimes teachers did not notice the difference between the two types of questions - those testing the understanding of information given and those building upon the information given to extend the pupil's understanding of the subject. Sometimes, in order to save time, the teacher herself would actually give the

answer to a question! Such methods do not call upon any high mental ability or activity from the students and are thus undesirable.

The problem-centred method: it is the usual practice in the UAE for the teacher to present the solution without allowing enough time for the students to think and develop their ideas. Thus she controls the direction of the lesson entirely. One teacher gave the excuse for this as to save time and to prevent students suggesting undesirable ideas in their answers with which she might not be able to deal.

However, Islam expects Man to be a thinking creature, and perceives thinking as an obligation. In Islam, the thinking tools - intellect, sight, hearing, touch, taste - are expected to be used - but responsibly, and not in an immodest manner.

The Qur'an deals with some issues in a questioning way which is little short of brilliant and enables understanding. Thus it encourages Man to be a thoughtful person.

Muhammad (pbuh) used discussion and questioning techniques with his companions, during which he listened to, and accepted, the opinions of others sometimes instead of his own. An example: when a companion showed a preference for a certain site to make camp at the Battle of Badr, he accepted the suggestion and changed the camp location according to the companion's advice.

(c) Independent Study and Activity Techniques in the UAE and their relation to Islamic Ideology and the Methodology of the Qur'an and Muhammad (pbuh).

This technique is the least used in the Emirates. Islamic subject classes rarely acknowledge most of the aids mentioned in this section. Islam is still considered to be a theoretical subject, depending on talking more than on doing. An example of the lack of enthusiasm for teaching techniques using active-learning is acting (simulation) in the class which is seen by some teachers as a waste of time and effort. I can state that, as I found from my observations, drawing is also very much neglected in Islamic teaching - I mean here drawings of nature studies, not human beings where drawing is a controversial issue in Islam. The same goes for construction of models which is

never done as a class activity but usually done by the teacher out of school hours or by employing a carpenter. I also found that school outings are rarely undertaken, and, when they are, are done so by more than ordinarily enthusiastic teachers. Then they tend to be visits to a book exhibition or a mosque. Games are looked upon as shameful, because Islamic classes are meant to be serious. The same applies to the use of puppets which are only occasionally used (as before by enthusiastic, committed teachers) and then only for children under 7 years of age. Group work is rarely seen as a teaching method, and the use of video and television does not occur often in Islamic classes.

It could be argued this paucity of activity-based learning and use of modern technology in teaching is because resources are not available. However, the fact remains that there is an absence of activity and teaching aids in the Islamic lessons in the UAE. I think that the use of these thought-stimulating and information-giving aids could be beneficial in the formative training of students for future citizenship.

If we refer back to the ideology of early Islam, activity is given much importance - Man is God's *Khalifa*, and is not expected merely to amass philosophical ideas in his mind but to apply those ideas in deeds and in behaviour to civilise the earth. This is the criterion by which Man will be judged. The Qur'an shows prophets as being active models - 'doers' as well as talkers. Mohammad (pbuh) followed talk with deed and usually combined the two. Once he pointed to a dead animal to illustrate his point, on many other occasions he drew in the sand to illustrate his teaching.

From the comparative illustrations above, it is clear that a wide difference exists between method application in the traditional Islamic sources and those in the UAE today. Whilst most of the methods used in the Emirates can trace their roots to Islamic ideology and the Qur'an and Mohammad's methodologies, application is not so successful as that in Muhammad's time and, if adopted, might produce a very different teaching style from that which exists today in the UAE. This study has led

me to believe this would be beneficial.

Furthermore, there are Islamically justified methods which are not given their proper application, time and place in UAE religious education today. For instance, sometimes the use of fear is employed when exhortation or an appeal to reason would be more appropriate. It is unfortunately a fact that teachers tend to use fear a lot of the time to make their point. Other examples consist of the use of discussion in a situation that would be better clarified by the use of a story; the use of a description of God's creation instead of allowing pupils to look around them to investigate God's greatness.

Finally, I observed teaching methods being used which can be seen as contentious - the use of folklore is very popular but many stories differ from what they were originally used for in the traditional Islamic sources. The companions were used to concentrate on ten verses at a time, memorise them, teach their families and act upon their message. Once this was achieved, Muhammad (pbuh) would teach them another ten verses and so on. Today in the UAE memorising has taken on a different dimension - it is employed mainly for the purpose of memorising the Qur'an. The same applies to recitation of the Qur'an. These methods were originally meant to develop clearer reading in a good voice, ie training to improve the quality of what is disseminated by the speaker. In my observations, reciting lessons tended to be whole class memorisations for examinations, without the students having the chance to understand or apply what they were learning by heart.

Another case is that of keeping silent and listening when the Qur'an is read. This dominates all Islamic religious lessons, even when discussing issues other than the Qur'an. Sadly, this practice is used by teachers to control the class.

From my observations I can say that Islamic classes in the UAE suffer from a lack of the use of teaching aids. Most teachers do not recognise the importance of them, and even when they do, little application occurs, whereas Islamic ideology calls upon people to believe in God through seeing, touching and thinking, and recognising

his creation. This is acknowledged and applied in the Qur'an and by Muhammad (pbuh) (see Chapter III).

Other teaching aids were observed in use in the UAE which have no reference in the Qur'an or Muhammad (pbuh), viz television, video, recorded tapes, language laboratories and posters. Whilst there is nothing in the *Shariah* preventing their use, responsibility must be exercised to ensure they are used in accordance with the concepts and principles of Islam.

In conclusion I identified a factor that could inhibit Islam teachers. This is weakness in Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). Such inclination would lead either to wrong interpretations or prevent teachers from creating new methods or application because they fear to commit heresy.

Having concluded this section, it is important to note that some of the discussions carried out with the teachers and supervisors were mainly concentrated on what should be performed, not on what actually exists in the educational field of the Emirates. I could differentiate these model discussions through my own experience and the effect seen on the pupils. Nevertheless, such models could be true but it is more likely that there is something wrong in the application.

#### **Different estimations of the value of freedom and activity.**

From the previous discussion on the position of Islamic methodology and methodology currently applied in the Emirates, it is clear to me that two factors are responsible for the mismatch between the two methodologies. These are the absence of free thought and expression by the students to enable them to arrive at an understanding of the material, and the fragmentary nature of activities used by the teachers for the students to achieve comprehension. These two will be examined in further detail in the following section in the light of both the current methodology practised in the Emirates and Islamic traditional methodology.

### 1. Freedom in Islamic Education Lessons in the UAE

The teaching methodology practised in the UAE is an integral part of the whole educational system, and is restrained in character. Neither society, the teacher, the parents, nor the students have a voice in the curriculum, the methodology or the allocation of resources in the UAE and thus it can be argued, it exists in an undemocratic environment. There is a danger that decisions as to methodology, resource allocation, etc., may be coloured by political ideologies and those in control might be moved by political aims (however laudable) rather than disinterest. There is no requirement for administrators at a high level in the Ministry to have educational experience on which to base their decisions. Thus, there is a danger here that decisions may be coloured by these factors and the result could be interference in the content and teaching methodology inhibiting free thinking and expression. An example of this is that pupils are prevented from questioning the behaviour of some people who are influential in the country. The teacher's usual response is to tell the students not to introduce ideas that have nothing to do with the topic.

There are many other reasons (see Chapter V) why free expression and exploration of ideas are discouraged. The problem-centred approach is firmly controlled by the teacher and criticism is discouraged. Students conform as there is always the fear in such situations that disagreement may lead to a student receiving lower grades. In other cases, where students may bring up topical questions relating to religion, lack of understanding or misunderstanding of events on the teacher's part often means that the student's questions go unanswered as the teacher refuses to answer them or cannot answer them to the student's satisfaction.

Chapter III shows that traditional Islamic ideology contained in the Qur'an and in incidents in Muhammad's life (pbuh) urged Man to question and investigate and He encouraged the contribution of the learners (pp.31-33 and 39-50).



Obstacles facing the use of free expression within Islamic Education in the UAE

In the process of my research I came to the conclusion that the lack of freedom in Islamic lessons is related to external factors that are out of the control of the teacher. These are:

1. The prevailing philosophy of materialism gives handicraft work a very low status which as well as contradicting many of the principles of Islam, discourages students from the creative handwork involved in some activity-based learning.
2. A wide gap exists between the theories promulgated in Islamic education and the life lived by the ordinary person in the UAE. People may appreciate the principles embodied in Islam and admire the victories achieved by it in the past, but do not apply the principles in their own life.
3. The education received in the university usually does not mention or encourage freedom of expression and therefore, teachers are not familiar with it, nor are able to apply it in the classroom.
4. It is rare that mention is made in literature of the role of the educator or in guidance to supervisors of the benefits of giving pupils freedom in class to experiment and express themselves, or to be able to act naturally in the classroom situation.
5. The lack of recognition of the concept of freedom as a civilising factor in society means that people have no ambition to explore this dimension within the classroom situation, or indeed, out of it.
6. The fear of getting into trouble or arriving at false conclusions has meant that many teachers practise far too much control in the classroom and discourage the development of students' intellects.
7. The existing curriculum is very full and this leaves little time to allow teachers to apply teaching methods encouraging free thought or an exploratory approach to the material being studied.

## 2. Activities in Islamic Education Lessons in the UAE

Before I discuss the problem of activity-based learning in Islamic education and its role and use within the classroom, I will first outline the different kinds of activities which are currently used in the UAE education system. The two main types are activities which take place within the lesson and extra-curricular activities.

### a. Classroom Activities

It is fair to say that, on the whole, lessons in Islamic education are completely lacking in any kind of student activity. Students have a wholly passive role. The absence of activity-based learning is highlighted when comparing lessons in Islamic education with those in other subjects. Islamic education lessons usually take the form of an instructive talk by the teacher, who also may use dialogue, questions and (strictly controlled) discussion as part of the lesson. Teachers are usually strict and make it clear to students that what is expected from them in lessons on religion is to be quiet and serious. They may even think it is bad manners to interrupt with a question or suggestion! Consequently these lessons are often held in a very quiet and restrained atmosphere. There is little movement and student contribution is minimal as it has been impressed upon the students from an early age that anything connected with the Qur'an and the Hadith must be taken very seriously. Added to this is the fact that the personality and behaviour of the average teacher of Islamic studies is often of a serious nature and one which, moreover, takes a hard line in interpreting Islamic codes of conduct. Thus there is much emphasis on manners and morals, and laughter is discouraged, humour is frowned upon as being in questionable taste, given the subject matter. The materials and textbooks used are also somewhat dry and rely heavily on memorisation and oratory, all of which contribute to a dull and motionless atmosphere pervading the classroom. Thus lessons are conducted in an intensely serious atmosphere with the result that they are often not very enjoyable.

b. Extra-curricular Activities

There are many extra-curricular activities possible within the field of Islamic education in the UAE and there is great enthusiasm amongst some of the teaching staff for such activities. In addition, students enjoy taking part in such activities and often become very much involved in them. However, the aims and objectives of the teachers are often never fully realised - not necessarily through lack of enthusiasm or personal ability - but often due to the lack of funding and support from the Ministry of Education for extra-curricular activities. The standard and frequency of such activities varies greatly from school to school and often depends on the conscientiousness and zeal of individual teachers. Examples of extra-curricular activities in the field of Islamic education in the UAE can be found in Chapter IV.

Obstacles facing the use of activity based learning in Islamic education in the UAE

It is incumbent upon us to understand fully the difficulties and obstacles facing the use of activity-based learning in Islamic education lessons in order that we may overcome and solve these problems.

1. One of the main problems facing the introduction of activity-based learning in Islamic studies is the lack of conviction of its necessity amongst teaching staff, and their misgivings as to its benefits. The evidence of this is nowhere seen more clearly than in the teacher training colleges where student teachers are given no instruction in the methods and applications of activity-based learning. In fact the teacher training degree course itself is based entirely on lectures, discussion and dialogue and contains no practical work of any significance.
2. Another problem is that within the Ministry of Education, those responsible for setting the aims and objections of the education policy in the UAE and for drawing up curricula, place no importance on, nor give any place in the timetable to activity-based learning in Islamic studies.

3. A consequence of the first two problems is the ignorance on the part of the teacher of the benefits of activity-based learning. She has never learned of it, nor seen it in action during her teacher training and, as a teacher, finds no pressure or directive from the Ministry of Education to use it in class and therefore usually comes to the conclusion that such a method is unsuitable for the subject of Islamic studies and is without benefits for it.

4. Lack of funding is another major stumbling block. Activity-based learning, both inside and outside the classroom, requires funds and teachers are not allowed to ask students for money to pay for extra activities. This means the only course open to the teacher wishing to use activity-based learning such as excursions is to pay for the materials and expenses from her own pocket. The number of teachers who have the enthusiasm and financial wherewithall to do this are, of course, few and far between.

5. Activity-based learning, of necessity, usually involves a lot of preparation, and as well as spending a large part of the day in the classroom, teachers have to help with the administrative work and in the general running of the school, eg playground supervision. Consequently the teacher often has little time and energy left even to contemplate the extra preparation required for learning-based activities.

6. Due to the general lack of emphasis on activity work within the profession, it is often the case that when a teacher has spent her spare time and money on including activities within her lessons, she will receive little encouragement or praise from her supervisor. In addition, since activities are not found in the curriculum of Islamic studies, her professional status is not enhanced by her work in this activity and subsequently the enthusiastic teacher will often become discouraged and disheartened by the lack of recognition of her efforts.

7. The system of examination in the UAE relies heavily on memorisation of given texts and this presents another problem. Society places an emphasis on the attainment of good examination results and consequently it is often felt by parents that

time spent on activity work is time taken from more productive work.

The above shows that there are many obstacles in the way of introducing activity-based learning into Islamic education lessons and at present the concept of activities with Islamic studies is very weak in the UAE. This is despite the fact that Islamic teaching emphasises that Man, who is placed on this earth as vice-regent, has a responsibility, through the practical application of his skills and talents, to work for the improvement of his environment and all that Allah has created for him on earth (see Chapter II). It therefore follows that in order for Man to realise his full potential, these skills and abilities must be taught through practical activities from an early age.

### **Recommendations**

1. There is a need to strengthen the relation between Islamic Education methodology in the UAE and the philosophy of Islamic Educational theory so that the goals of Islam are reached and students benefit from the Islamic traditional sources of methodology.
2. Further enhancement of the relation between the Islamic lessons and everyday life is needed, to accommodate Islamic ideology into the framework of students' lives, and to get nearer to Muhammad's methodology. This is to add living experiences when applying teaching methodologies.
3. Guidance needs to be given to student teachers on the use of modern teaching methodologies and teaching aids, etc., and existing teachers need to be informed of current practice in education in other countries *vis-à-vis* new teaching methods and aids. Teachers in the UAE need to get together more in workshop situations.
4. A revised syllabus is needed in the UAE for teacher-training institutes covering all aspects of work content, teaching methodologies and the

environment in which the teacher works. This should give serious consideration to the philosophy of freedom and activity with special reference to their influence on the teaching process.

5. Teachers in the UAE need more opportunities to apply new methods in a creative and relaxing atmosphere. Ways of creating such an environment are: by reducing the load of administrative work, by reducing the number of weekly teaching sessions (usually 18 to 21), and by reducing the volume of work in the curriculum to be taught in Islamic lessons. As regards the role of the supervisor, visits should be advisory and supportive and criticism should be constructive rather than judgemental. Encouragement and praise should be freely given where merited, especially for teachers exploiting methodologies which encourage active student involvement and interest in the subject. Teachers need to be encouraged to experiment with new teaching methods.
6. The Islamic Education Curriculum needs some modifications to reduce the volume and accommodate extra-curricular activities. The school text books should not be the only source of curriculum content. The aim of such modifications is to produce intellectually and socially active and practically competent citizens rather than those having only a body of theoretical knowledge.
7. A special budget needs to be allocated to encourage creative teachers and to cover expenses of teaching aids needed by teachers.

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