
THE ROLE OF ASKING QUESTIONS IN ISLAMIC PEDAGOGY AND MUSLIM TEACHERS PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Questioning among teachers and learners plays an important role in teaching. The modern teaching and learning literature suggest that asking questions both by teachers and students lead to enhanced understanding, digestion of material, better recall, and content retention. Questioning can also be used as a tool to engage students and increase collaboration among them. In some Muslim cultures and schools of thoughts, the public is expected to follow the scholars without the need for asking question or enquiring to investigate the source. However, this appears contradictory to the guidance provided by the Quran and the Sunnah where people are encouraged to actively ask questions and seek clarifications. The study delves into both Islamic and Western perspectives on the topic, and through a thorough analysis, presents a comprehensive discussion of the views to uncover common ground and areas of disagreement. Both Islamic and Western perspectives agree that questioning is a useful tool and technique in teaching with many benefits such as motivation, engagement, encouragement, interest creation, and increased effective learning. Western secular literature also suggests that excessive questioning is counterproductive, may hinder the learning process and that a balance must be struck between zero questioning and asking too many questions. The data from the Quran, the Sunnah and the Muslim teaching practices suggest that Western academic

literature agrees with and confirms the Islamic perspective both on the importance of asking questions and the counterproductivity caused by excessive questioning.

Keywords: Asking questions, Quran, Hadith, excessive questioning, Islam, Muslim, teachers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Asking questions is an important aspect of human communication and learning, and it has a long history in various religious and cultural traditions. In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an and hadith contain numerous references to the value and importance of asking questions as a means of seeking knowledge and understanding. However, the role of questioning in Islam is complex and multifaceted, and the Qur'an and hadith contain references encouraging asking questions yet caution against excessive or inappropriate questioning.

The act of asking questions or the practice of questioning remains one of the most important modes of expression, communication, and human interaction throughout history. Both past and present philosophers have utilized questioning to formulate ideas, strengthen arguments, and construct complex theories. Questioning has been one of the characteristics traits and a teaching tool in learning the Islamic disciplines. The Quran uses various types of such real and metaphorical questions. Similarly, the hadith are replete with examples indicating how the Prophet (ﷺ) let the companions ask questions and even engaged them by posing questions to the companions themselves (Badi et al., 2017).

In addition to the above, the Muslim learning heritage itself also encourages the use of asking questions. For instance, al-Baghdadi (d. 463AH/1071AD), would advise learners to sit silent but raise questions when it was time to do so. He further said that asking questions created a learning environment by appealing to the learner's readiness and willingness to seek

knowledge. Imam al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH/1277AD) advocated that a student should not feel shy of asking questions rather they should keep questioning until the matter is cleared, and all confusion is eliminated. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/1350AD), another distinguished scholar, considered questioning as one of the initial steps towards comprehensive learning. Others such as Ibn Jamā'ah (d. 733 AH/1332AD) also asserted that learners must not leave anything unclear and clarification must be sought through asking questions. Abul Walalīd al-Bāji (1081/474 AH) devoted a full chapter in one of his books to the value, benefit, and necessity of asking questions while learning.

A similar emphasis on the importance of questioning can be found in Western secular literature. For instance, Daniels (2002) and Day & Sachs (2004) insist that asking questions should be a frequently used tool in the classroom. According to Western pedagogical research, questions serve multiple purposes in the classroom, such as checking student understanding (Daniels, 2002), developing critical thinking (Day & Sachs, 2004), and promoting student involvement during the lessons (Daniels, 2002). By asking questions, teachers can assess if students understand the material and can subsequently provide additional help and support (Black & William, 1998). Studies have shown that effective questioning can improve learning retention and performance in assessments (Brookhart, 2013). Additionally, questions can also be used to stimulate critical thinking in students (Day & Sachs, 2004). Teachers can prompt students to think more deeply about a subject by asking open-ended or higher-level questions, which encourages students to analyze information from multiple viewpoints (Brookhart, 2013).

While both the Islamic outlook (as reflected in the Quran, Hadith, and Muslim scholars' tradition) and modern Western literature appreciate the importance of asking questions and discourage excessive questioning, there is a lack of any substantial research to synthesize these two perspectives. This paper aims to bridge the gap by analyzing both viewpoints and synthesizing them together to uncover common grounds or disagreements. Additionally, this paper attempts to ascertain whether contemporary empirical research substantiates or refutes the use of questioning in the instructional techniques employed by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as elucidated in the Quran and hadith. By highlighting the significance of questioning, the paper also provides valuable insight for Muslim teachers to regularly incorporate questioning as a tool for an effective teaching practice.

First and foremost, this paper critically reviews modern secular literature on the topic of questioning in the context of teaching and learning. Next, it conducts a thematic analysis of some Quranic verses and selected hadith of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) on the topic. The paper then, analyses data collected from ten Muslim teachers in the North of the United Kingdom (UK). The paper further proceeds to discuss the findings from the Quran, the Sunnah and Muslim teaching practices in the light of modern secular literature. Finally, the paper concludes by restating the claim that concept of questioning in secular literature and perspectives have a common ground and that the Muslim teachers need to include this tool as an essential component in their pedagogical practices.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Asking Questions

In Western academia, asking questions has long been recognized as a key pedagogical tool in teaching and learning. For instance, Daniels (2002) and Day & Sachs (2004) contend that it should be one of the most frequently and regularly used teaching tool. According to research, questions can serve a variety of purposes in the classroom, including checking for understanding (Daniels, 2002), promoting critical thinking (Day & Sachs, 2004), and encouraging student engagement (Daniels, 2002). By posing questions to students, teachers can assess whether students are grasping the material being presented and can provide additional support as needed (Black & William, 1998). Research has also shown that effective questioning can help students retain information and improve their performance in assessments (Brookhart, 2013). Furthermore, questions can also be used to promote critical thinking in students (Day & Sachs, 2004). By posing questions that are open-ended or require higher order thinking, teachers can encourage students to reflect deeply on a topic, as well as analyze information from multiple perspectives (Brookhart, 2013). Along with promoting critical thinking, asking questions can also increase student engagement in the classroom (Daniels, 2002). When students are actively participating in discussions and problem-solving, they are more likely to be motivated and interested in the material (Brookhart, 2013). Asking questions that require students to justify their answers or explain their thinking can also foster a sense of collaboration and encourage students to listen to and respect the perspectives of their peers (Brookhart, 2013).

There are several different types of questions that teachers can use in the classroom (Daniels, 2002). Low-level questions, also known as recall questions, require students to recall facts or information from memory (Daniels, 2002). These types of questions can be useful to check the basic understanding, but may not necessarily promote critical thinking (Brookhart, 2013). Higher order questions, on the other hand, require students to analyze, evaluate, or synthesize information and are more likely to promote critical thinking (Brookhart, 2013).

Besides the level of the question, the structure of the question can also impact its effectiveness (Daniels, 2002). Leading questions, which suggest a particular answer or contain a bias, may not be as effective in promoting critical thinking as neutral questions (Brookhart, 2013). Open-ended questions, which do not have a single correct answer, can also encourage students to think critically and engage with the material more deeply (Brookhart, 2013). There is also evidence to suggest that the timing and frequency of questioning can impact its effectiveness (Daniels, 2002). Research has shown that asking questions at regular intervals throughout a lesson can help maintain student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Brookhart, 2013). However, it is important for teachers to strike a balance, as asking too many questions can interrupt the flow of the lesson and may lead to student frustration (Brookhart, 2013).

It should be noted that asking question should not be a uniliteral activity on the part of the teacher. Rather it should be a mutual activity between teacher and learners. A study conducted by Lee & Driscoll (1988) found that learners who ask more questions in the classroom than others, have more chances of

better grades and higher levels of achievement. It is mostly like that such a difference is due to asking questions which helps learners to seek clarification of the material that leads to better comprehension and retention. Chou & Chiou (2010) also asserted that those who ask questions in the classroom appear to be more engaged and motivated than those who remain silent. Research suggests that learners who feel comfortable and safe in the classroom (Davies & Graff, 2011) tend to ask questions. Similarly, Chou & Chiou (2010) identified that learners are likely to ask more engaging questions if they feel that their teachers are responsive or approachable. A responsive and approachable teacher creates opportunities for learners to actively seek clarifications, thus facilitating an interactive and collaborative learning environment (Liu & Wilen, 2012).

2.2 Excessive Questioning

Even though a critical analysis of the literature indicates that asking questions has a vital role to create an enhanced learning environment, nonetheless, excessive question is found to be counterproductive. Excessive questioning is asking inappropriate or unrelated questions; such practice can have negative impacts on teaching and learning (Smith, 2016; Wang, 2019), may disrupt the flow of the lesson (Wang, 2019; Cai, 2018; Smith, 2016; Brown & Roediger III, 2014) hinder student understanding and engagement (Knight, 2017; Lai & Liang, 2015), and create a disorganized and chaotic classroom environment (Sibley & Macaro, 2010). When teachers ask too many questions, it can break the momentum of the lesson and cause students to become disengaged or confused (Smith, 2016). In addition, if teachers ask unrelated or inappropriate

questions, it can distract students from the main content of the lesson and hinder their understanding (Wang, 2019).

Research has also shown that students may become frustrated or anxious if they are unable to answer questions or if they feel that the questions are too difficult or unrelated to the material (Smith, 2016). This can lead to a decrease in student motivation and participation (Wang, 2019). Other studies found that when students are given a free hand to ask excessive questions, it leads to lesson disruption. For instance, White & Gunstone (1990) found that excessive questioning was disruptive and time consuming. Brophy (1998) identified that learner questioning is a useful tool but can turn into disruption if not well-managed and organized. Furthermore, too many questions by students can lead to lower levels of participation, chaotic environment (Smith 2016) and less positive perceptions of discussion among other learners (Huang & Shih, 2007). Excessive questioning hinders student understanding (Cai, 2018; Knight, 2017), they become overwhelmed, unable to process information (Cai, 2018), and leads to decreased retention of the material (Smith, 2016). Overall, the research suggests that excessive questioning can have negative impacts on teaching and learning (Brown & Roediger III, 2014; Cai, 2018; Knight, 2017; Lai & Liang, 2015).

Modern research suggests that asking questions is a valuable tool in teaching and learning (Daniels, 2002; Day & Sachs, 2004). By using a variety of question types and structures and considering the timing and frequency of questioning, teachers can promote critical thinking, check for understanding, and increase student engagement in the classroom. However,

excessive questioning is counterproductive; thus, a balance between no questioning and excessive questioning is essential.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of asking questions in Islam, with a focus on the Qur'an and hadith. To achieve this goal, a qualitative research approach was employed, including content and thematic analysis, textual analysis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research was particularly well suited for studies that aimed to explore complex, multifaceted phenomena such as the role of questioning in Islam. Qualitative research allowed for the collection/selection of rich, in-depth data that could provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

3.1 Data Collection

The study involved the interpretation of text from the Quran and hadith. For this purpose, verses of the Quran and Hadith were selected. For hadith selection, Mishkatal Masabih was used, with authentication by Albani. Data was also collected from ten Muslim teachers working in various Muslim educational institutions in the UK. As this paper was part of the PhD thesis on the Prophetic pedagogy, no new participants were recruited, and data that was collected earlier as part of the PhD thesis was analyzed. All real names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect participant privacy.

3.2 Semi Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were a flexible and in-depth method for gathering data from participants (Hsieh & Shannon,

2005). They allowed for the exploration of a wide range of topics and issues related to the study, while also allowing for the collection of detailed and specific data (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews were particularly useful for exploring complex and multifaceted phenomena (Srivastava, 2018), such as the role of questioning in Islam.

3.3 Content and Thematic Analysis

Content and thematic analysis was a method used for systematically analyzing written, spoken, or visual communication for the purpose of identifying patterns and themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It was particularly useful for examining texts, such as the Qur'an and hadith, for references to a particular topic; in this case, questioning (Bryman, 2012). The Qur'an and hadith text were analyzed for the use and purpose of questioning. This involved a close reading of the texts and the identification of patterns and themes related to questioning (Srivastava, 2018). Textual analysis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah involved the use of thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was particularly useful for organizing and synthesizing large amounts of data, such as the results of content analysis or interviews, and for identifying patterns and themes that emerge across the data (Srivastava, 2018). Text from the Qur'an and Sunnah were analyzed for references to questioning and the purpose of questioning. This involved a detailed review of relevant verses and hadith and the identification of themes and patterns related to questioning.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Islamic scholars and educators to identify their practices of questioning

in teaching (Srivastava, 2018). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes and patterns related to the use and purpose of questioning (Kvale, 1996) in the Islamic tradition. The data selected from the Qur'an and Hadith and that collected from the participants through these research methods was analyzed and synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role of questioning in Islam.

4. FINDING AND RESULTS

4.1 Asking Questions: The Islamic Perspective

Islam attaches great importance to the seeking of knowledge and encourages its readers to engage in the act of teaching and learning. In the following verse, Allah (Subha wa ta'ala) distinguishes those who are learned from those who are not.

"Those who have knowledge and those who do not have knowledge are not equal" (Quran 39:9)

and that one of the purposes of revelation is to

"Make clear to people what is revealed to them" (Qur'an 16:44).

The Quran not only attaches great importance to seeking knowledge, but it also provides practical tools, techniques and tips that make the learning process meaningful, clear and effective. Asking questions or questioning is one the several techniques that is reflected in the various verses of the Quran. It is seen as a vital part of the process of acquiring knowledge and seeking understanding of Revelation.

As such, asking questions is seen as a crucial part of the process of acquiring knowledge and seeking understanding of the

divine. Asking questions is deemed as a way of clarifying misunderstandings and seeking guidance. In the Qur'an, it is stated:

"If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, ask those who have been reading the Book from before you" (10:94).

This verse indicates the importance of asking questions even from those who rejected the revelation sent to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). The purpose of questioning in the verse is confirmation, in other words, clarification. As-S a'di (2018) commented on this verse saying it is an instruction to the Prophet (ﷺ) to confirm the soundness of the Quran and that they will verify that it matches with what the people of the book have.

And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So, ask the people of the message if you do not know. (16:43)

According to Shafi (2009), people of the message in the above verse means scholars among the Jews. This again validates asking questions from any source to seek understanding, confirm and reach the truth encouraged. Ibn Kathīr (2003), while quoting at-Tabri, is also of the opinion that 'ahledhikr' in this verse means people of the Book.

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/1350AD), in his *Ilm al-Mowaqeeb* Ab Rabbil Aalamin, argues that four types of questions are generally asked by questioners. There is no fifth type. The first type is to ask about an injunction, that what is the ruling about a particular matter. The second type is to enquire about

evidence for a particular ruling. The third type is to know the reason behind a ruling. The fourth type is to question the evidence that goes against the answer.

The Quranic questions, however, can broadly be categorized into two types: clarification questions or understanding questions, and rhetorical questions. Clarification questions are those where the learners may not have understood or might have been confused to clearly grasp a particular content. These questions may also be called understanding questions which are asked to gain deeper understanding of a particular topic or subject. Rhetorical questions, on the other hand, are asked to make a point, and may not necessarily need a response. Quranic interpreters have also analyzed two forms of questions: the genuine questions and the figurative/metaphorical ones (Badi et al., 2017). The former are real questions seeking clarification, confirmation or increasing understanding, while the latter are rhetorical in nature.

According to Kehlī (2009) and al-Balkhī (2007), the number of questions in the Quran is estimated to be 1363. In total, 946 words have been used in the Quran for asking questions. However, their unique number is 12 without repetition. Broadly speaking, these have been employed for asking clarification, understanding or just as rhetorical technique. In the following table, the number of occurrences of the interrogative particles used in the Qur'an have been listed.

Table 1. The Number of Occurrences of The Interrogative Particles Used in The Qura'n

S.No	Word	Occurrences	
1	أَ	Will/shall you? Have you?	507
2	مَا maA	What	95
3	هَلْ hal	Do/did you? Have you	93
4	كَيْفَ kayof	How	80
5	مَنْ man	Who	37
6	أَيُّ Ayye	Which	35
7	أَنَّى Anna	How / Where	27
8	مَاذَا madhaa	What	26
9	كَمْ kam	How many	20
10	أَيْنَ ayna	Where	12
11	مَتَى mataa	When	9
12	أَيَّانَ ay~aAn	When	5
	Total		946

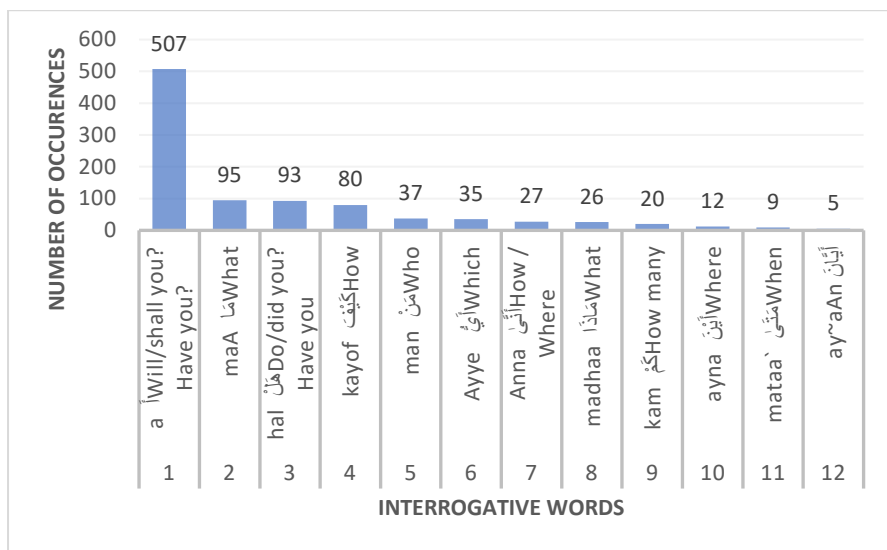


Figure 1. Occurrences of Interrogative Words in the Quran from Highest to Lowest

The following table shows the number of questions asked in each chapter of the Quran arranged in the order from the highest to the lowest number.

Table 2. Number of questions in each surah in the Qura'h

Surah No	Surah Name	No of Questions	Surah No	Surah Name	No of Questions
7	Al-araaf (The Elevation)	50	36	Ya-Seen (Ya-Seen)	19
2	Al-Baqarah (The Cow)	49	5	Al-Maidah (The Table)	18

6	Al-Anam	43	16	An-Nahl (The Bee)	18
10	Jonah (Younas)	41	12	Joseph (Yusuf)	17
26	As-Shuaraa (The Poets)	41	56	Al-Waqa'ah (The Inevitable)	17
55	Al-Rahman (The Compassionate)	32	52	At-Tur (The Mount)	16
3	Al-Imran (The Family of Imran)	31	53	Al-Najam (The Star)	15
4	An-Nisa (Women)	29	54	Al-Qamar (The Moon)	15
37	As-Saffat (The Aligners)	28	67	Al-Mulk (The Sovereignty)	15
11	Hud	25	25	Al-Furqan (The Criterion)	14
21	Al-Anbiyab (The Prophets)	25	40	Al-Ghafir (The Forgiver)	14
27	An-Namal (The Ants)	25	17	Al-Isra (The Night Journey)	13
39	Az-Zumur (The Throngs)	24	29	Al-Ankabut (The Spider)	13
9	At-Tawbah (Repentance)	22	38	Saad (Saad)	13
23	Al-Mominoon (The Believers)	21	41	Fusilat (Detailed)	13

43	Az-Zukhruf (The Decorations)	21	13	Ar-Raad (Thunder)	12
18	Al-Kahf (The Cave)	20	34	Sheba (Saba)	12
19	Maryam (Mary)	19	46	Al-Ahqaf (The Dunes)	12
20	Taha (Taha)	19	47	Muhammad (Muhammad)	12
28	Al-Qasas (The Stories)	19	78	An-Naba (The News)	12
22	Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage)	11	97	Al-Qadar (Decree)	1
35	Fatir (Originator)	11	99	Al-Zalzalah	1
77	Al-Mursalat (The Unleashed)	11	100	Al-Aadiyat (The Racers)	1
24	An-Nur (The Light)	10	104	Al-Humaza (The Backbiter)	1
32	As-Sajdah (The Prostration)	9	107	Al-Maoon (Assistance)	1
68	Al-Qalam (The Pen)	9	1	Al-Fatiha (The Opening)	0
75	Al-Qiyamah (The Resurrection)	9	62	Al-Jumrah (Friday)	0
14	Ibrahim (Abraham)	8	63	Al-Munafiqoon	0

				(The Hypocrites)	
30	Ar-Rum (The Romans)	8	87	Al-Aala (The Most High)	0
31	Luqman (Luqman)	8	91	Ash-Shams (The Sun)	0
50	Qaf (Qaf)	8	92	Al-Layl (The Night)	0
15	Al-Hijr (The Rock)	7	98	Al-Bayinnah (The Clear Evidence)	0
51	Ad-Dhariat (The Spreaders)	7	102	At-Takthur (Abundance)	0
45	Al-Jathiyah (The Kneeling)	6	103	Al-Asr (The Time)	0
79	An-Naziaat (The Snatchers)	6	106	Al-Quraish (The Quraish)	0
65	At-Talaq (Divorce)	1	108	Al-Kawthar	0
72	Al-Jinn (The Jinn)	1	109	Al-Kafiroon (The Disbelievers)	0
73	Al-Muzzammil (The Enwrapped)	1	110	Al-Nasr (Victory)	0
76	Al-Insaan (The Man)	1	111	Al-Masad (Lahab) (The Thorns)	0

86	At-Tariq (The Nightly Visitor)	1	112	Al-Ikhlās (Monotheism)	0
			113	Al-Falaq (The Daybreak)	0
			114	An-Nas (the Mankind)	0
				Total	1109

The importance of asking questions is also evident in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was known for his willingness to answer questions and his patience in doing so. He also encouraged his followers to ask questions.

A Bedouin once visited Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and enquired: “Tell me about an action that I shall do and that I obtain paradise.”

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) replied: “(That) you worship Allah alone and that you do not make partners with Him. Offer the compulsory prayer, pay the obligatory charity (zakah) and fast (the month of) Ramadan” (Bukhari, Muslim, Mishkaat al-Masaabih 14, 16).

At certain times, the Prophet (ﷺ) would give personal lessons or, to delve further into a topic, he would ask a follow-up question after the initial question had been answered. For example: Mu'ad Ibn Jabal asked the Prophet (ﷺ): “Messenger of Allah, tell me of deeds that will make me obtain paradise and keep me away from Hell.”

Before answering, the Prophet (ﷺ) would complement the questioner for asking a significant and serious question. He would then provide a direct response to the question without including unnecessary details.

“Worship Allah and do not associate any partner with Him. Perform the prayer, give the obligatory charity (zakah), fast in the month of Ramadan, and go on Hajj.”

Even though the previous question had been answered, the Prophet (ﷺ) asked another question to ensure that the learner was ready for the next stage of the lesson and that their preferences had been taken into consideration.

“Shall I not guide you to the doors of good?”

After receiving a response indicating that the learner was ready to proceed, the Prophet (ﷺ) used metaphorical language in the lesson.

“Fasting is a shield, charity puts out fire like water does so, and midnight prayer has a similar effect.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) asked another consenting question before proceeding to a more advanced, highly figurative stage of the lesson.

“Shall I not guide to the head, support and top of the hump?”
The Prophet (ﷺ) asked.

Again, receiving a confirmatory answer, the Prophet (ﷺ) proceeded:

“Islam is its head (of the matter), prayer is its support and Jihad is its top of the hump.”

Before the session is concluded, the Prophet (ﷺ) employed the questioning technique and adapted the kinaesthetic teaching style.

“Shall I not tell you of something that controls all of that?”. He held his tongue in his fingers and said, “Restrain this” (Ahmad, Tirmidhi; Ibn Majah; Mishkaat al-Masaabih 29 - Graded Hassan by Alizai).

At other times, the Prophet (ﷺ) would teach a group of learners and then it would lead to a question / answer session. The following hadith is the prime example:

They (the women) asked: “Why (for what reason) O Messenger of Allah?”

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: “Generally, you are used to abuse and remain ungrateful to your husbands and there are some among women who are deficient in intellect and your religion. You have been best at taking away the understanding of a wise man”.

They (the women) enquired: “What does that mean that we are deficient in intelligence and religion, O Messenger of Allah?”

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: “Is not the testimony of a woman equal to half the testimony of a man?”

They replied: “Yes”.

Regarding the deficiency in religion the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Is it not that when she (a woman) passed through her monthly periods (menstruation) she does not pray and fast?”

They replied: “Yes (it is so)”

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “That is their deficiency in religion” (Bukhari; Muslim; Mishkaat al-Masaabih 19).

Both the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet are replete with examples that can be cited to support the claim that questioning is an important tool and technique in the Islamic Pedagogy. The Quran and the Sunnah uses real questions to provide clarification, deeper understanding and engage the learner. The Quran and the Sunnah make use of real questions to achieve multiple goals such as providing clarity, promoting deeper comprehension, and engaging learners. The use of real questions in the Quran and Sunnah highlights the importance of an interactive and engaging learning experience in promoting deeper understanding and retention of information. Rhetorical questions on the other hand, inspire the learner to delve deeper into the subject matter and attain a more profound understanding. These questions encourage the reader/learner to reflect to make the learning process richer and more meaningful.

4.2 Discouragement of Excessive Questioning in Islam

The Quran, as seen above, encourages the reader to ask questions and seek clarification. The Prophet(ﷺ) and those who have knowledge are encouraged to respond the questions being posed. However, excessive questioning is not only discouraged but strongly condemned. In the following verse, it has been commanded to avoid excessive questioning.

"Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble" (Qur'an 5:101).

So unnecessary questioning can add to problems and confusion than clarification and understanding. The following verse, in similar tone, prohibits discussion without knowledge.

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned" (Qur'an 17:36).

Sometimes, the questioner may pose a question that is meaningless or even silly due to ignorance.

"And those who have no knowledge say, "Why does Allah not speak to us or there come to us a sign?" Like those before them, they speak words of no account. Thus, the hearts of those without knowledge are in their breasts" (Qur'an 2:118).

A question may have nothing to do with the learner in respect of it benefits or understanding. Such questions should be avoided.

"They ask you about the Hour: "When will be its arrival?" Say, "Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time except Him. It lays heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not come upon you except unexpectedly" (Qur'an 7:187).

The hadith literature also indicates, with numerous examples, that excessive questioning is discouraged. For instance:

"Do not ask too many questions, for some people before you were destroyed because of their excessive questioning and their disagreement with their prophets." (Sahih Bukhari)

Another hadith indirectly refers to asking excessive questioning may lead to innovations with serious consequences.

"The worst of all matters are those which are newly invented, and every newly-invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire." (Sahih Muslim)

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/1350AD), in his *Ilm al-Mowaqeeb Ab Rabbil Aalamin*, stated that only relevant question with practical benefits should be posed and that all irrelevant questions should be avoided. He even insisted that there was no need to answer if a question is irrelevant and that answering it will not benefit the one who asked. He says:

If the questioner appears to benefit from the right answer, then a right answer must be given. However, if the scholar to whom the question is posed that the question is irrelevant and that it will not benefit the questioner in any way, it is ok for the scholar to digress and speak about matters that are beneficial to the questioner (al-Jawziyyah, 2016).

4.3 Questioning by Muslim Teachers – The Practice

Many teachers reported using a combination of posing questions to their students and allowing them too to ask questions. This approach was seen as effective in fostering engagement, creating interest, motivation and encouraging critical thinking.

Sheikh Majid mentioned using questioning as a way to stimulate independent thought in his students.

That is mainly questioning, or you will ask questioning, what you're trying to do is to provoke thought, what you're trying to do is provoke independent thought, what you're trying to do is provoke is to make that person.

The teacher considers questioning as the main tool both by students as well as the teacher. Provoking thought is considered to be the primary purposes of providing the learners the opportunity to ask questions. It gives the learner independence and freedom to develop critical thinking. The phrase “provoke to make that person” indicates that the aim is to build and develop the learner into an inquisitive and curious participant in the class discussion.

Dr. Fatah placed great importance on the questions and answers being discussed and made referred to the story of Moses and Khadhir in the Quran as an example.

If you see the story of Prophet Musa and Khidir (A.S) is a good example of a teacher and a student on questioning.

The story of Khidir and Moses involves a series of questions. In the story, questioning is not discouraged, however, the right and appropriate time must be sought for asking questions. The incorrect time may not lead to a good relationship between the teacher and the learner. It averts developing a conducive learning environment. The story envisages that learners must have the patience to absorb the content first and wait for the right time to put forward relevant questions.

Sheikh Doosam preferred to start his sessions by either asking a question or telling a joke in order to relax the audience and make them feel more comfortable. This approach allowed him to establish a balance between being serious while also lighting the mood. He believed that this helped create an environment in which the audience felt more comfortable asking questions.

And number 2, put the audience at ease, they can ask questions. So, I think you think it's a balance, I am quite serious, but at the same time, you know, I kind of break the ice.

In addition to creating a pleasant learning environment, the teacher can see the benefit in questioning in terms of “putting the audience at ease”. They are free to start asking questions. This could also benefit them to activate the schema by appealing to existing knowledge in their cognitive framework, so that they can logically connect new ideas with the older ones. The teacher sees it breaking the ice. So, there is not a direct start of the lesson rather slowly transitioning the learners by putting them first in the learning mode.

Sheikh Saif consistently encourages his students to ask questions in order to gauge their understanding of the material being taught. This helps him to assess their comprehension and identify any areas where further clarification may be needed.

So, what I tend to do is I ensure that many questions are being asked, while I'm going along, for example, going to teaching a gardaan and make sure. Do you understand it?

Sheikh Saif takes it a step further by allowing his students to ask questions that may not be directly related to the topic being discussed.

I believe that it is beneficial for students to ask questions, even if they are unrelated to the current topic of discussion. I encourage my students to ask questions that they may be hesitant to ask others and assure them that I am open to answering any questions they may have. I emphasize the importance of asking questions as a means of learning and

encourage my students to be curious and ask questions in order to better understand the material being covered.

Some teachers either remained silent or did not respond to this interview question. This suggests that some teachers understand the importance of questioning and employ the technique in the classrooms. Others do not consider it as important or to be employed as a teaching tool rather sparingly using it when absolutely necessary. The data from the teachers also is void of any reference to the Quran or the Sunnah. Even though, the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) is very explicit about employing the technique and its benefits, none of the teacher referred to the primary Islamic sources except to the story of Moses and Khidr.

5. DISCUSSION

The critical review of both the Islamic and secular literature suggests that the role of questioning in teaching and learning is complex and multifaceted. The Qur”and hadith contain several references that encourage questioning as a means of seeking knowledge and understanding. These findings suggest that asking questions is valued and encouraged in the Islamic tradition as a way of gaining insight and deepening one's understanding of the faith. The Quranic verses and traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ) have enough examples of the benefits of asking questions. The secular literature confirms the Islamic standpoint on the various benefits of questioning as a teaching and learning tool. Questioning plays a key pedagogical tool in teaching and learning (Daniels, 2002; Day & Sachs, 2004) and the Quran and hadith frequently use the tool for maximum learning. One of the roles of engaging learners in questions is

checking for understanding (Daniels, 2002). This is clearly illustrated in the Prophetic tradition. The Prophet(ﷺ) would normally pose a question before even proceeding to the main lesson. This served the purpose of checking the learner's existing level. In case, a learner is not ready, he/she can be provided additional support (Black & Wiliam, 1998) in the form of custom material. Sometimes, the Prophet(ﷺ) would ask a question in the middle which can be an equivalent of modern concept check questions or CCQs as the lesson progresses (Daniels, 2002). Questioning improves learners' performance as a result of formative assessment and feedback (Brookhart, 2013). This can be seen in many instances in the Prophetic traditions. For instance, when Mu'ad Ibn Jabal was trained for taking over as governor to the people of Yemen, the Prophet(ﷺ) conducted a formative assessment in the form of questioning to assess and give feedback.

Teachers can encourage students to think critically and consider multiple perspectives on a topic by asking open-ended or higher-order questions. These types of questions require students to analyze information and evaluate its credibility or consider the potential consequences of a concept. For example, a teacher might ask students to assess the reliability of a source or evaluate the potential impacts of a particular idea. This approach, as described by Brookhart (2013), can help students develop deeper understanding and more complex thinking skills. This can be seen in many examples when the Prophet(ﷺ) would ask question and elicit the companions' responses. Daniels (2002) and Brookhart (2013) asserted that student engagement, participation, motivation, and increased interest may be achieved by simply engaging them in questions and

answers. This also helps learners share opinion with their peers. The Prophet (ﷺ) would ask questions and let the companions speak. Other companions present would listen and then wait for the Prophet's feedback. The study also suggests that the Prophet (ﷺ) would use different kinds of questions such as low-level or recall questions (Daniels, 2002), high order questions and structured questions (Brookhart, 2013), according to the context. The data from the interview questions by the Muslim practicing teachers suggest that questioning is an important tool, and some teachers employ it as pedagogical tool. However, not all teachers responded in the same vein. Some teachers were reluctant to respond in detail and were even unaware of the importance of questioning in the light of the Quran and the Sunnah.

The paper also confirms that irrelevant, unnecessary, and excessive question is unproductive and may have a negative impact on learners (Smith, 2016; Wang, 2019). This may disrupt the flow of the lesson (Wang, 2019; Cai, 2018; Smith, 2016; Brown & Roediger III, 2014), hinder students learning (Knight, 2017; Lai & Liang, 2015), create disorganized and chaotic learning environment. The modern secular and Western literature agree with the Quranic and Hadith perspectives on avoiding unnecessary, irrelevant, and excessive questioning. The Muslim scholars for the most view the same view that excessive questioning is counterproductive and hence must be avoided. Thus, the study suggests that there may be limits to the types of questions that are considered appropriate or acceptable in the Islamic tradition, and that excessive or inappropriate questioning may be discouraged.

Overall, the results of this study provide insight into the role of questioning in teaching and learning in the Islamic tradition and suggest that it is an important and valued aspect of the learning process. Further research is needed to better understand the role of questioning in different contexts and settings, and to explore ways in which questioning can be effectively used to support learning and understanding in the Islamic tradition.

6. CONCLUSION

The role of questioning in Islam is complex and multifaceted. The text of the Quran, the Sunnah and the Muslim scholarly literature encourage questioning as a means of seeking knowledge and understanding and is seen as a valuable tool in Islamic teaching and learning. Some Muslim teachers use the questioning technique in their teaching practice. They understand that it is important to employ the tool to create a conducive learning environment, motivate learners, create engagement, arouse curiosity and interest. Secular academic literature confirms the Islamic position on the role and importance of questioning as a vital tool in Islamic pedagogy and education.

However, excessive, or inappropriate questioning may be discouraged in the Islamic tradition and can have negative impacts on learning. This again appears to agree with secular literature on teaching and learning. Teachers can use open-ended or higher order questions to encourage critical thinking and the consideration of multiple perspectives. The Prophet (ﷺ) used various types of questions depending on the context. Muslim teachers should aim at maintaining a balance in using questioning as a teaching tool. At the one end of the continuum,

there may be discouragement of question while at the other end, too many questions may be asked. The study confirms that most Muslim teachers understand the role of asking questions and regularly incorporate questioning in their teaching practices. The results of this study also suggest that questioning is an important and valued aspect of the learning process in the Islamic tradition. However, questioning is a comprehensive area and other methods such as lesson observations should be used to explore the topic in the practices of the Muslim teachers and its impact on learning. Further research is needed to explore the complexities and limitations of questioning in Islam in a much wider context.

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