

Underlying Essential Quranic Teaching Elements: Book Review

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Abstract: This study aims to provide an analysis of al-Qabisy's ideas based on his book, "*Ar-Risala Mufassaah Liahwali Al-Mutaalimin Wa-Ahkam Al-Muaalimin Wal-Mutaalimin*" (Detailed letter to the conditions of students and rules for teachers and students). This study is carried out to examine Al-Qabisy's main ideas in teaching the Quran, and the implications of his ideas in improving the Qur'anic teaching among children. A content analysis method has been used to obtain all research objectives. There are eight key components of Quranic teaching that have been discovered from this study. They are student, teacher, intention, teacher's responsibility, syllabus, schedule, stages of learning, and assessment. These components are very useful in improving the Qur'anic teaching among children. The concepts presented in this article is hoped to be beneficial in improving the teaching of Qur'an among children.

Keywords: Quranic teaching, Islamic education, intention, syllabus, assessment

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) first educational experience is the learning of the words of the Quran. The first revelation of Qur'anic verses in Surah al-'Alaq is a clear proof that the Quranic teaching is the first education for Muslims. Allah has stated in this Surah which means, "Read: In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man out of a clot of congealed blood: Read: And your Lord is the Most Bountiful- Who taught by the pen- Taught man that which he knew not." Hence, all Muslims are obligated to read, learn and understand the Quran in order to cultivate quality Muslims in all aspects (Md. Sawari & Awang Mat, 2013). This context has been displayed by the first generation of Muslims during the time of Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions. Islam always put emphasis on the importance of Qur'anic teaching. However, there are still many children who are left behind in term of their Qur'anic reading and understanding (Mohd Zainul Arifien, 2011; Yusoff, 2008). Therefore, to enhance the teaching of Quran and improve children's understanding towards the Quran, it is important to discover the ways of previous experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Al-Qabisy

The name of Al-Qabisy is Abu al-Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad Khalaf Al-Maarif al-Qabisy. He was born in Kairawan, Tunisia, located at North Africa, on Monday, Rajab 324 AH corresponding with May 13th in

the 936 M. He passed away on 3 Rabiul in the early year 403 H, coinciding with October 23, 1012 [1]. Al-Qabisy lived in Kairawan since childhood until adulthood. It was a city that was later known as the centre of scientific knowledge and activity. During his 5 years of study, he travelled to the Middle East countries until 353 AH / 963 M. He then studied with one of the Alexandrian scholars in Egypt. He travelled to North Africa after finishing his studies in Egypt. Abu Abbas al-Ibyani bin Masruf al-Dibaghi and Abu Abdillah bin al-Assa'ali Masrur were among the scholars whom he studied the hadith and religious knowledge in North Africa. Later on, he went back to his hometown in Kairawan and studied Islamic Jurisprudence with Malikiyah scholars, of which he then became an expert in the Fiqh field. Most of his thoughts were based on Fiqh and Hadith as he was very expert in both fields [2].

Al-Qabisy wrote many books during his lifetime. One of his famous writings is Al- Mufassalah li Ahwal al - mutha ' alaimin Ahkam al - Maulimmin wa al - Muta'allamin ' [2]. This book which has three chapters and 80 pages discusses on child education in the 4th century AH. It has a noteworthy contribution on Qur'anic teaching which comprises the details of the circumstances of the students, classroom management and the laws that govern the teachers and students. The first chapter of this book discusses on the interpretation of the faith, Islam and *Ihsan*. The second chapter focuses on students and the last chapter is about teachers.

Child Education

Child education is significant in Islam. Child is born to follow his instinct and be shaped by his parent. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said,

"Every child is born on *Al-Fitrah*, and his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism. As an animal delivers a perfect baby animal, do you find it mutilated?" [*al-Bukhari*].

The hadith above mentions that every human being is born in *fitrah* (clean, pure state). Every parent is responsible to educate their children with knowledge. Children are like white fabric while parents have the power to shape and design the fabric according to their needs and interests. However, not all designs are suited to the patterns drawn on a white cloth. Wrong pattern will soon affect the cloths and become the design of the cloths forever. This anaphora means that parents cannot teach their children just any knowledge. Nevertheless, they must educate their children the truth and right knowledge [3]. Therefore, early childhood education in Islam requires children to recognize religion using the guidance in the Quran. This is because the Qur'anic education can develop an individual towards excellent spiritual character. Spiritually sound can lead oneself towards a better life, developing an intelligent mind, creating stable emotions and nurturing healthy physical environment [4].

From this point of view, it is necessary for parents to develop Qur'anic teaching for their children. Knowing the religion from childhood is everyone's right to ensure this knowledge will be accepted for their life survival. International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research [5] quoted that:

"All Children have the right to be trained by their parents to perform the rituals of his or her religion. The importance of early training is that it allows religious practice to become an easy and acceptable habit that children will maintain and preserve. Parents should endeavour to be role models for their children in terms of adhering to best conduct. They also have the obligation to provide their children with love, kindness and mercy and to avoid harshness and cruelty. (p. 8)

Since Qur'anic teaching is essential for every child, Muslims have to work to enhance the teaching of Qur'an.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine al-Qabisy's main ideas in teaching the Quran based on his book, "*Ar Risalatul Mufassolah Liahwali Al Mutaalimin Wa Ahkam Al Muaalimin Wa Mutaalimin*" (Detailed letter on the conditions of students and rules for teachers and students). This study also aims to identify the effects of al-Qabisy's ideas on improving the Qur'anic teaching among children.

Research Questions

1) What are al-Qabisy's main ideas in teaching the Qur'an based on his book "*Ar Risalatul Mufassolah Liahwali Al Mutaalimin Wa Ahkam Al Mutaalimin Wa Mutaalimin*"?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher has conducted a content analysis to find the answers for all research questions. Titscher [6] defined content analysis as:

"method that focuses on quantifiable aspects of text content directly and clearly, and as a rule on absolute and relative frequencies of words per text or surface unit. This concept also includes all those procedures operating with syntactic, semantic and pragmatic categories, seeking to quantify these categories by means of a frequency and survey of classifications". (p. 55).

The above statement views content analysis as a method in assisting researcher to discover the scripture and come out with a particular theme. Therefore, for this study, all information is collected from al-Qabisy's classic book which is written in Arabic, "*Ar Risalatul Mufassolah Liahwali Al Mutaalimin Wa Ahkam Al Mutaalimin Wa Mutaalimin*" (Detail letter to the conditions of students and rules of teachers and leaners). The researcher will select chapter two and three for analysis purpose.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

I) Al Qabisy's main idea in Quranic teaching

To answer the question about al-Qabisy's main ideas in Qur'anic teaching, the researcher has referred al-Qabisy's book "*Ar Risalatul Mufassolah Liahwali Al Mutaalimin Wa Ahkam Al Mutaalimin Wa Mutaalimin*". The findings of this study are; the fundamental concept of education is well explained by Al-Qabisy. Overall, the concepts are focused on the Quranic teaching. According to Al-Qabisy, Qur'anic education is compulsory for all children as they are able to understand their religion well through Quranic education. He said; "The rule for a child in religious

matters is (just like) the rule for his father as long as he remains in his childhood. Then, will a father leave his son ignorant of religion, while teaching the Quran makes him stern in religion?" (p. 292).

In this book, the Quranic teaching can be categorised into eight key points which are; level of student, teacher, intention, teacher's responsibility, syllabus, schedules, step in learning, and assessment.

1) Level of student

Al-Qabisy focuses on Qur'anic education for children only, at the age of seven until puberty. This statement is supported by Fuad [2], who stated that al-Qabisy's book presented clear understanding on child education. Al-Qabisy said:

"Find for their children a special teacher, who is able to be permanent with them pasturing them same as he pastures his own children. (p. 296).

2) Teacher

The Oxford Dictionary Online defines 'Teacher' as a person who provides instruction or education or called as a teacher. The Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary clearly defines this term as "a person who is an expert in the theories and methods of education". Referring to this idea, teachers play a vital role in educational process as they become the main sources and providers of information. Hence, we cannot deny the fact that teacher is not as an ordinary job, rather it is an expert work. With respect to al-Qabisy's book, it clearly proves that parent is the first person who is entitled to teach the Quran. He stated that parents are responsible to introduce the Quran to their children, teach and guide them until they become adult. Al-Qabisy further stated:

"In religious matters, the rule for a child is (just like) the rule for his father as long as he remains in his childhood. Then, will a father leave his son ignorant of religion, while teaching Qur'an makes him stern in religion?" (p. 292).

"You have given the knowledge of the Quran, something that a father is pleased to give to his son; it is a father's passionate for teaching his son who does have neither benefit nor harm, cannot differentiate between whatever he takes for himself, does not have anyone to defend him except his father who are responsible for his life. Then, benevolence receiving from a father towards his son is similar as he is being good to others who do not have relation with him yet he is pleased to be good for his needy child, no trick for his son and he could help his self with whatever good for him from his view". (p. 291).

"It is compulsory for the teachers to teach the students some of the Qur'anic verses to recite in prayer

after teaching them the obligatory prayers. The Muslims in the previous years used to teach the Qur'anic lessons to their children, bring them (applicable) teachers and put their effort in it". (p. 291)

According to Al-Qabisy, parents are responsible to teach the Qur'an to their children. The first education of children always starts at home. Therefore, parents ought to take part as the teachers at home. However, if the parent is not around or already died, guardians are responsible in providing Quranic education for children. They can use the inherited wealth to hire a teacher to teach the Quran to the children. However, in the case where parents did not leave any properties, the responsibility is then transferred to relatives. On the other hand, in the case of orphans, the government has to take the responsibility of providing education for the child. He said;

However, if parent have a wealth, do not let father or guardian, If the father died- record in his book, hired a teacher using the wealth to teach the Quran accordance to the need. If for the orphans does not have guardian, so the Muslimin Ruler will take care of his need and give his teaching like his father or his guardian. If there is no ruler of the country, it is view like before, if all philanthropies are gathered in that country they shall take care on their society welfare; care on this orphan is part of it. If the orphan has no money, so his family or relatives or whoever near him, they're responsible in his education/ learning on the Quran.(p. 291)

Furthermore, al-Qabisy further explains in his book on the duty of Qur'anic education. The role of Qur'anic teachers can be transferred from parents to teachers if the parents have a strong excuse or not skilled in teaching the Quran. Hence, they can assign an expert to teach their children. However, parents must be careful in choosing the right teacher for Qur'anic subject. Al-Qabisy stated that:

"Find for their children a special teacher, who is able to be permanent with them pasturing them same as he pastures his own children. (p. 296).

"Moreover, learning Qur'an from the teachers is also permissible without any obstacle, the teacher are paid just like it is paid for the copy of Qur'an, while buying some of its parts which are permissible to buy. It is also allowed to hire, what is allowed in teaching, from the teacher. These are based on what I mentioned to you earlier. Each one emphasizes on the other. It is permissible (for any one) to hire a teacher for teaching Qur'an, and for a teacher to ask for payment. It is not prohibited to take wage given that he fulfills all the terms and conditions of teaching. As it is mentioned earlier to you by me, Malik says they (the scholars) used to let anyone hire teachers".(p. 302)

There is a situation which further clarified this matter. Once, Ibnu Qasim was asked: "What if I am employing someone to teach my son for mastering Qur'an, and paying him one dirham?" Malik replied: "No problem." Ibnu Qasim says: "And also there is no problem if you pay him one sixth. No problem if the Qur'an teacher is paid his right before the admission of child." (p310)

In conclusion, teaching the Quran is a great responsibility and the priority in teaching the Quran comes to the parents first. They ought to make sure their children know and understand the Quran well. This responsibility will continue on guardians, relatives or the government in the case of the parents' absence. They need to hold this responsibility to make sure all children receive the Qur'anic education.

3) Intention

According to Al-Qabisy, the teaching and learning of the Quran have to be only for the sake of "Maarifatul addin" or understanding Islam. It indicates that the Quranic teaching is not only to read and memorise, but also to understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verses. However, misconception among some teachers always happen when they think that the first objective of teaching the Quran is to make sure that the students complete whole the Quran (Khatam) without the need to understand the verses. Thus, every teacher has to make sure their intention of teaching the children is to introduce Islam and develop a deeper understanding of the Quran among them. Al-Qabisy said:

"Among the studiosness for the child is not to move to another chapter unless he memorizes it with its syntax and scriptures."(p. 317).

Al-Ahwani [2] supported this idea by stating the purpose of teaching according to al-Qabisy and all other Sunni scholars which is to know the religion (Ma'rifah al-din), theoretically and practically" (p. 99). The Quranic teaching and learning required deeper understanding of the reader by exploring the verses and practicing the command

4) Teacher responsibility

Teachers need to know their roles very well as they are responsible in various aspects in Quranic education. Al-Qabisy suggested in his writing that the comprehensive responsibility of an teacher in teaching the Quran are instructing students, guiding the recitation, training their skills in writing, polishing their ability in memorizing, constructing their personality and monitoring the whole process accordingly.

"It is mandatory for the teachers after teaching them (the students) obligatory prayer, to teach them

some of the Qur'anic verses which they should recite while praying." (p291).

"Among the studiosness for the child is not to move to another chapter unless he memorizes it with its syntax and scriptures".(p317)

"What the teacher should do is to strive for finding what is thought as compulsory for the children. If he succeeds in it, then it is fair to take what he deserves from the wage. However, if he neglects this condition, he is not supposed to take that; for those who allow him to receive the wage, have clearly explained what he needs to fulfil from the terms and conditions. So, if he violates this rule, then they do not permit him to take"(p312).

Al-Qabisy says: Regarding your question: "is it encouraged for a teacher to be strict on his disciples or do you think he should not be stern, but be friendly?" (Yes, he should be,) because, as you know the children will be under the aforementioned command. However, if the teacher behaves in a way he ought to, and consider them well, then he puts the things in its proper places, being, he is responsible for their etiquette, the one who should forbid what is bad and force them to do what is good for them. It is not out of being friendly or compassionate with them. Indeed he is just like a father to them.(p313)

"Among the duties of the teacher upon his disciples is that he should do justice with them, while teaching. He should not prefer some of them to some others, even they differ with their wages (which are given to him), or some of them present him gifts. Yet he can prefer whomever he wants at his leisure time, after engaging in doing justice among them".(p315).

" And teacher should guide the each one of the boys,"(p316)

5) Syllabus

Analysis of this study shows that the syllabus for Quranic teaching covers the whole verses of the Quran completely. Teachers need to teach all Quranic verses in a systematic arrangement. Students must master each verse very well before continuing the next verses. Al-ahwani [2] mentioned in his book; "It is mandatory for the teachers after teaching them (the students) obligatory prayer, to teach them some of the Qur'anic verses which they should recite while praying"(p291).

"It is possible to conduct an exam once the child finishes learning the Quran to check what he has memorized and learned from the holy writing. The memory skill of the Quran can be identified at the time of completion (khatam al-Qur'an). After that, the child can stop study, continue learning any skill for his

livelihood or begin with another stage of advanced study of the writing”(p. 65).

6) Schedules

According to Al-Qabisy, the schedule for Quranic teaching is divided into three divisions; 1) time for recitation and discussion, 2) writing, 3) memorization and revision. He further mentioned: “As Sahnun says about the issue: To teach, present and allocate them some time for teaching the Qur’an, for instance, Wednesday or Thursday night. Then he should allocate some days for teaching writing. At the time, let them communicate with each other as it is good for them to express (what they have) and inculcate adab within each other. ”(p316). “It is mandatory for the teachers after teaching them (the students) obligatory prayer, to teach them some of the Qur’anic verses which they should recite while praying”(p. 291).

7) Stages in learning

There are five components in achieving a comprehensive Qur’anic learning which are reading, exploring, understanding, memorizing and writing. In Al-Qabisy’s writing, he mentioned that “Among the studiousness for the child is not to move to another chapter unless he memorizes it with its syntax and scriptures”.(p.317).

According to Al-Ahwani [2], the fundamental purpose of this school level is to teach children the Quran, reading, writing and part of grammar, Arabic language and mathematics (p. 11). Reading is the first stage where students will learn how to read the verses correctly. The next stage is exploring in which students will explore the structure and grammar of the Qur’anic verses until they able to develop their understanding about the verses. After a complete understanding on the verses, they start to memorize and finally write the verses.

8) Assessment

Al-Qabisy mentioned that the students have to go through assessment process in order to measure the results of their study. The assessment is the methods used to determine achievement of learning outcomes or any method used to determine the extent of an individual’s achievement [7]. In this study, assessment refers to the methods used to determine Qur’anic students’ achievements. The teachers should measure their student’s level of proficiency and achievement once the teaching and learning process finishes. He described in his book; “When the child finishes learning the books, it is possible to have an exam to check what he memorized and learned from the Qur’an. The Qur’anic memory skills can be identified at the time of completion (khatam al-Qur’an). Then he can either stop study, going for learning any skills to earn his livelihood or begin with another stage of advanced study of the writing.”(p. 65)

As a summary for the first research questions, there are eight main components of Qur’anic teaching presented in al-Qabisy’s book which are; level of student, teachers, intentions, teacher’s responsibility, syllabus, schedule, stages in learning, and assessment. Figure 2 will explain these components:

II) Implication of Al-Qabisy’s Ideas in teaching Quran.

The implication of al-Qabisy’s ideas in improving the Qur’anic teaching is found in the analysis as follows;

Al-Qabisy mentioned in his book that the Qur’anic education is mostly focused during childhood stage at the age of seven. His ideas were according to Prophet’s saying;

“Order your children to pray at the age of seven. And beat them [lightly] if they do not do so by the age of ten. And separate them in their bedding. (al-Bukhari 3:734)

Based on the psychological aspect of development, children start coping with academic demand at the age of seven. According to Erik Erikson’s theory of development, this age is considered as the Industry vs. Inferiority stage, the period in which children will start to upgrade various skills [8].

Second, in relation to the roles of teachers, al-Qabisy stated that teaching the Quran is an important job. However, parents are the most responsible in terms of priority. In the case when parents want to assign teachers for their children, they have to make sure that the teachers can treat the children like their own. Therefore, it proves that the priority in term of responsibility in teaching the Quran comes to the parents first. Numerous studies also showed a significant relationship between parental involvement and students achievement [9, 10]. In 2010, Center for Real-world Learning at University of Winchester has conducted a study on the impact of parent engagement on student’s success and the findings showed that:

“Parents are a major influence on a child’s success in life. While the quality of schools and the nature of the child’s peer group matter significantly, it is from the home that young people derive lasting effects on their character, mindset and attainment. Parent engagement in the educational development of their children improves attainment more than any other single factor. Parents can help their child most by

having regular and meaningful conversations with them, by setting high aspirations and by demonstrating their own interest in and support of learning at home and at school".(p. 1)

Intention is the third element of Quranic teaching. It is narrated on the authority of Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), Abu Hafsa Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), saying:

"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger, the migration will be for the sake of Allah and his Messenger. And whoever migrates for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for." (Bukhari & Muslim).

All Muslims have to act according to their intention. Their intention will influence their actions. The Prophet has mentioned that the result of the actions is depending on the intentions. If the intentions are good, so do the result. Therefore, in Quranic teaching, the intention is noteworthy for the understanding of Islam.

Teachers have to work hard in order to fulfil the intention. Al-Qabisy through his book has mentioned comprehensive guidelines for teachers which include instructing students, guiding the recitation, training their skills in writing, checking their Qur'anic memorizations, shape their personality and monitoring the whole process accordingly. The first role is instructing students about what they have to read and the right way to read the verses. This role is important in developing students' understanding as Silver Strong & Association [12] found that classroom instruction is the one and greatest factor affecting students' achievement. The second role of teacher mentioned by al-Qabisy is guiding students in Quranic reading, writing and understanding. According to Arbuckle [11], various studies indicated that teacher is a guidance worker. Another role of teacher is training students with reading and writing skills. These skills are very important for students to master as the first revelation command to human being is to Read, (al 'Alaq, 1) Read: In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man out of a clot of congealed blood: Read: And your Lord is the Most Bountiful- Who

taught by the pen- Taught man that which he knew not. These verses clearly indicate that the first education for Muslims should be the Qur'anic Curriculum. Apart from that, teachers are responsible to assess as well as check the Qur'anic memorization of the students. In educating their students, they cannot just let them free from any assessment [13]. The importance will further explain in the last element of the assessment.

Besides that, teachers are also responsible in shaping their students' personality during the process of Qur'anic teaching. Teachers have to clarify clearly about each and every command stated in the Qur'an. Students have to perform well in learning the Quran as Imam As-Syafie has already mentioned that "Knowledge is light and will not enter the dark heart". Lastly, teachers are responsible in monitoring the whole progress as stated by Glasgow [14].

"The monitoring of the effectiveness of learning is therefore an essential element of the overall management practice within all educational establishments. It is aimed very clearly at improving teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice is an important consequence of the process" (p.2).

The aims of "*Ma'rifatul Ad-din*" will be achieved successfully if the teacher is able to follow the guidelines. Therefore, all these roles are noteworthy in helping students to achieve goals in Qur'anic education.

Al-Qabisy has discussed on topic syllabus. He described that the syllabus have to follow a systematic step although the syllabus cover whole the Quran. Students need to master each verse before proceeding to another verse so that they can fully understand each verse clearly. This idea is supported by Bloom [15] who indicated that "Students are helped to master each learning unit before proceeding to a more advanced learning task", cited in Naturalistic Education Theory (2004-2013). In the Quranic teaching, the syllabus of reading and writing also has to follow a systematic schedule. Children must follow a systematic rule provided either by their parents or teachers. Apart from that, time management also has a substantial influence on students' achievement. Therefore, it is noteworthy to state a permanent time for teaching the Quran [16].

Through his book, Al-Qabisy also presented several stages for learning the Quran. There are five stages of learning the Quran which covers the process of reading, exploring, understanding, memorizing and

writing. These stages cover all the three areas in learning activities. As presented by Bloom [17], reading and writing activates the psychomotor domain, exploring and memorizing triggers the cognitive domain and lastly, understanding develops the affective domain. Thus, by following these stages, a comprehensive learning of the Quran will be achieved.

Finally, the eighth element of Quranic teaching is assessment. According to Mikre (2011), this element is important for teaching the Quran because it helps us to measure the learning outcome of the process. Therefore, when parents teach the Quran to their children, they can measure their children's ability and improve it for the next lesson. In conclusion, this study has discovered eight elements of Quranic teaching. Al-Qabisy's ideas on the Quranic teaching are important in enhancing the Quranic teaching among children.

CONCLUSION

There are eight key components of Quranic teaching that have been discovered from this study. They are student, teacher, intention, teacher's responsibility, syllabus, schedule, stages of learning, and assessment. These components are very useful in improving the Qur'anic teaching among children. The concepts presented in this article is hoped to be beneficial in improving the teaching of Qur'an among children. Further research is needed to promote other Muslim scholar works and publish it in high level standard.

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