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The Role, Significance and Centrality of Teaching Methods in a learning Process; An Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at critically analyzing the role, significance and centrality of teaching methods in the teaching-learning process. The educators consider the teaching methods as the basis on which the teaching profession is based and on which teacher's success in teaching depends. The skilful and successful teacher in his method of teaching is the most successful teacher in his work as a teacher. On the basis of the method used, the teacher can be judged and evaluated. This study uses the descriptive analytical synthetic descriptive approach which is mainly interpretative in the form of textual commentary. The study traces the sources of methods of teaching in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet and his implantation of these methodologies in his mission. The study assesses the development of these methodologies during the caliphate period and succeeding generations, putting more emphasis on Ibn Jamaah, al-Ghazali, Az-Zarnuji and ibn Khaldun's views on teaching methodologies. The study noticed dissatisfactions aired out by scholars of different periods about the weaknesses of teaching methods in the modern Muslim educational system. The study recommends the return of the contemporary Muslim educational institutions to the basics of teaching methods in the Quran and Sunnah as implemented by the prophet and earlier generation of Muslim educationists in addition to modern teaching methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, Muslim educators have underscored the importance of teaching methods. Right from the time the Prophet begun receiving revelation from Allah, the role of wise means of conveying the revealed message were emphasized by Allah Himself. This culminated into numerous approaches used by the Prophet in getting across the received message. Even after the demise of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the importance of the method did not cease but continued to attract the attention of Muslims scholars during the caliphate period and the succeeding generation until today, though with noticeable changes and weaknesses, which to some extent negatively affect the proper conveying of the Islamic message, thus hindering its proper understanding, which culminates into poor implementation of the Islamic teachings, as a consequence, man fails to properly play his role as a vicegerent.

This crucial role of the methodology as viewed by Muslim educators of various ages lead to the appearance of a number of important works, either expressing the poor methods used or explaining and expounding what a right method entails. Consequently, al-Ghazali in his *Ihya Ulum Din* explicates the importance of the method by giving details of what a correct method constitutes. This was a master piece of work which in return lead to the works like that of ibn Khaldun, az-Zarnuji and ibn Jama'ah who used al-Ghazali's design as standard measure to the methods used during their respective periods.

Though ibn Jama'ah's work is not considered revolutionary, it is detailed as a result this study will utilize it as its focus in analyzing the role, significance and centrality of teaching method as far as the teaching-learning process is concerned in relation to the works of al-Ghazali, ibn Khaldun and az-Zarnuji. Like other aspects of Islam, the methods of teaching in Islam were as a result of the divinely revealed message that instructed the Prophet to convey the message with wisdom and in the best, simple and clear terms.

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Methods of Teaching in the Quran and Sunnah:

The Quran 16:125 states: *“Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious, for thy Lord knoweth best who have strayed from his path and who receive guidance”*. This verse apparently instructs the Prophet to carry out his mission of inviting people to their Lord. But this invitation besides being one of wisdom, is also supposed to be in beautiful and best approaches full of elegance.

Allah says again in al-Quran 3: 159: *“It is part of mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh –hearted they would have broken away from about thee....”* This resulted into an extremely gentle nature of the Prophet, (peace be upon him), which endured him to call and teach, and it is reckoned as one of the mercies of Allah.

Further still al –Quran 29:46 states: *“And dispute you not with the people of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong but say we believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you”* The divine instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him) cultivated into him a wise, calm, and gentle temperament during the period of his mission. This is reflected in his traditions, either verbally or in actions. An evidence of this can be found in his words when he said, *“We prophets form one class. We have been commanded to give every man his rightful place and to speak to men according to their intellect”*. On another occasion the Prophet is reported to have remarked that, *“when a man speaks such a word to a people who cannot grasp it with their intellect, it becomes a danger to some persons”*

In another tradition narrated Ibn Mas’uud, *the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to take care of us in preaching by selecting a suitable time, so that we might not get bored. (He abstained from pestering us with sermons and knowledge all the time).*

Further still, narrated Anas that *whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke a sentence (said a thing) he used to repeat it thrice so that the people could understand it properly from him and whenever he asked permission to enter, (he knocked the door) thrice with greeting.*

Basing on the above verses of the Quran and Prophetic traditions, al-Ghazzali in his *Ihya Ulum Din* (Fazlur Karim Trans. 1982) formulated his sixth duty of the teacher, which states that a teacher should teach his students up to the power of their understanding. Al-Ghazzali continued to assert that the students should not be taught such things as beyond their power of understanding. Al-Ghazzali further observes that, he wastes his learning that gives it to one unworthy and commits a sin one who withholds it from one worthy.

The Quran and Prophetic traditions laid the foundation of the method of teaching, which is characterized by wisdom, discretion, gentleness, and clarity and considerate; none-dogmatic, self-regarding, non-offensive, and its manners and arguments modeled on the most courteous and most gracious illustrations and examples and above all addressing people according to the level of their intellect. These major features being driven by the urge to obtain Allah’s pleasure, throughout history have acted as standard measure on which principles of the method of teaching Islamic education have been based. Consequently, any diversion from them always impedes learning, thus, Muslim educators of various ages react by guiding Muslims to the right approaches, since the importance of a method in getting the message across is acknowledged.

On this point, interestingly Abdul Rahman Salih (1980) asserts that, variations in methods employed in order to achieve the same goals is another way of approaching learners. Abdul Rahman further scrutinizes that, the Quran too employs several approaches to convey Allah’s words to human beings; this has an implication that variation of methods is of vital importance. According to Abdul Rahman, the Quran used both verbal and non-verbal methods in conveying the message. The verbal methods included; telling stories. This is the most frequent Quranic method, whereby most of the Surahs contain one or several stories, besides nearly thirty Surahs derive their names from one of the stories mentioned in the Quran.

Asking questions is another methods used in the Quran. Questions in the Quran may be posed in response to a statement or they may serve as a starting point. An illustration for this is when the angel’s question in the Quran (2:30), *“Wilt thou place there in one who will make mischief?”* as a response to Allah’s announcement that a vicegerent will be created on earth.

Abddul Rahman once more reveals that the technique of asking questions leads sometimes to that of deduction where the conclusion or underlying principles is reached after several objects or facts have been presented. This is exemplified when Abraham concluded that there is God, when he saw a star at night and said this is my Lord, but when it set he said I do not love those that set. The very same thing happened on seeing the moon and the sun. The fourth Quranic method is giving metaphors or similes. In these metaphors tangible objects are used in order to facilitate understanding the concept under consideration. In (29:41) the partners of Allah are held in similitude to the spider’s web which is very flimsy. Thus, the Quran did not only lay down principles of the methods of teaching, but it utilized them in conveying the message, which acts as a yardstick to the appropriateness of methods or any shortfalls.

The Inappropriateness of Methods of Teaching Islamic Teaching Islamic Education

The inadequacy of methods used in teaching Islamic Education were noticed by Az-Zarnuji (1947) during 1203, which resulted into writing his book entitled *The Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*. Az-

Zarnuji noticed that many students were struggling for an education and for the attainment of knowledge, but falling short of their aim, either due to lack of cognizant of the right methods of learning or they did not abide by them but thrashed around and wasted time. Consequently, Az-Zarnuji shouldered the responsibility of explaining to students a method of study, which he read about and heard from his teachers.

Mansoor (1983) confirms the above observation and adds that, Az-Zarnuji is one of the several Muslim writers who discussed the problem of education and learning during the Middle Ages. Mansoor again argues that Az-Zarnuji's treatise is a very good observation on the subject of teaching and learning, where Az-Zarnuji noticed a number of students failing to attain knowledge in spite of their struggle, which he attributed to poor methods used. As a result he suggested psychological rather than religious and moral means.

Like Az-Zarnuji, Ibn Khaldun (1980) too noticed weaknesses in the methods used at that time. He observed that the tradition of scientific instruction during his period had practically ceased to be cultivated among the inhabitants of the Magrib, due the disintegration of its civilization, which made its dynasties lose their importance, thus the disappearance of the crafts.

Mansoor observes that Ibn Khaldun differed in his interpretation as well as evaluation of educational goals and activities from the other Muslim thinkers whose approach focus exclusively on religious and ethical aspects. For Ibn Khaldun's approach included sociological functions and psychological foundations of education as understood today.

Abdul Rahman (1980) is among the contemporary Muslim thinkers who observed that, despite the use of different methods in studying the educational issues, Muslim educationists of different schools of thought; jurisprudential, philosophical, Sufi's, social, literally or empirical in dealing with historical, analytical, comparative etc., all of them drew on an Islamic scientific methodology though with different degrees of mastery of the components of that methodology. Further observation is made by Abdul Rahman that, moral and ethical aspects occupy a prominent place in their methodologies, since; they mould a Muslim's life irrespective of his profession or office.

Al-Attas (1999) is another contemporary Muslim thinker and scholar who has been keen on numerous Muslim problems and how to overcome them. He deliberates a lot on definitions relating to the essential elements of education and the education process envisaged in Islam. Al-Attas further explicates that, the essential elements of Islamic system of education are based on certain key concepts which include; the concept of religion (din); the concept of man (Insan); the concept of knowledge (ilm and ma'rifah); the concept of wisdom ((hikmah); the concept of justice (adl); and the concept of right action (amal as adab). Al Attas further stresses that Muslims have apparently forgotten in the way of methodology the correct use of linguistic symbol.

It is apparent, that Al-Attas's observation though constitutes essential elements of Islamic education; it is the same principles on which a right method is constructed. It is the (Din) religion that instructs Muslims to acquire knowledge to understand their creator and the message sent to them, with methods full of (Hickman) wisdom and (Adl) justice in order to properly play their role as vicegerents.

On the other hand, Wan Mohd Nor (1988) elaborates on al -Attas's purpose of education in Islam, by asserting that, its rationale is to produce a good man; a man of adab who recognizes and acknowledges the right and proper places of things. Wan makes it clear that adab implies knowledge and right methods of knowing, which should preserve man from errors of judgment and disgrace. Wan went ahead to accentuate that, wisdom is a pre-requisite in producing proper knowledge, which results into justice in the individual, society and natural environment.

Wan has been enthusiastic too, when he notes that being educated is not necessarily equivalent to having good thinking skills. He scrutinizes that Muslim education systems encourage memorization rather than thinking, where by students rely on model answers, rote -learning and spotted questions rather than understanding concepts and theories. Consequently, Wan examines that it is not the subject that encourages critical and creative thinking; it is the teaching and learning approaches and the atmosphere of tolerance in classroom and society that stimulates this process.

Tibawi (1979) too showed his concern and dissatisfaction when he questions the efficacy of methods and apparatus used to achieve the desired results. Tibawi answers his own question by reaffirming that as the campaigns for eliminating illiteracy are concerned there is reason to doubt their suitability and adequacy.

Rosnan Hashim (1996) agrees with Wan Mohd Nor and Tibawi and adds that, the methodology of teaching Islamic education is strictly teacher- oriented. Teachers have great authority and students are receptacles of factual knowledge. Rosnan further notes that this practice stifles independence, critical thought and creativity. Although there are changes, elaborates Rosnan, many teachers still find it difficult to change from the old, set ways on the pretext that new approaches require more time before the specific objectives can be obtained, by arguing that given the amount of material to be covered in the syllabus and the efficiency of the old method, direct imparting of knowledge is better. Interestingly, Rosnan again notes that this change in teaching strategy is most difficult for those teaching revealed sciences because they have been among those who teach in the most authoritarian manner. Rosnan again concurs with Wan Mohd Nor that, the methodology of teaching Islamic

studies, suffer from the weakness of overemphasis on memorization and there is underutilization of learning by experience and the bookish tradition is still considered superior.

Feryal El Khalid (2001) agrees with Wan Mohd Nor and Rosnan Hashim and further elucidates that the method by which values, principles and fundamental Islamic concepts are instilled in students are still clearly inappropriate for their mentality and level of development.

Consequently Abdur Rahman Salih concludes that lack of knowledge pertaining to the know-how to convey the desired materials to learners will affect the quality of learning outcomes as the inadequacy of teaching methods may hand-cup or cause undue wastage of effort and time. No wonder, teaching methods have always attracted Muslim Educators attention of various periods, Ibn Jama'ah being one of them.

In spite of the crucial role of the specific methods of teaching as found in the Quran and Hadith, and emphasized by Muslim educators of various epochs, they were not the major focus of Ibn Jama'ah, al-Ghazzali, az-Zarnuji and Ibn Khaldun; to them a teaching method was looked at as a procedure or a process of learning that constitutes a number of steps to be observed by the teacher as well as students and violation of any step would render knowledge acquisition unsuccessful even with the use of the right method. Therefore, the teacher, the student and the methods are inseparable entities in learning, if one of them lacks, it renders the rest incomplete, thus the failure of the teaching learning process in producing an apt vicegerent. This is why neither al-Ghazali nor Ibn Jama'ah nor Az-zarnuji emphasized on the method of teaching without referring to the teacher and the learner.

Ibn Jama'ah (2006) is of the view that, since the teacher is the custodian of whatever is entrusted and granted to him from the knowledge, he should have a lasting observation of Allah in secret and open conduct and guard against his piety in all his activities, statements and actions. Besides that, a teacher should strictly follow the external forms of Islamic ordinances, like the five daily prayers with congregations, salute all irrespective of their status, enjoin right conduct, forbid indecency and undergo patiently the hardships of the right path, speak the truth in-front of the rulers and do not care about the blame of those who have fault with others.

Similarly, elucidates Ibn Jama'ah (2006) that the teacher should also try to establish the Sunnah (the Prophet's practices and actions) and do away with the innovations in Sharia and observe religious teachings for the sake of Allah and cater for the well fare of Muslims according to Sharia, through the means and ways approved by it. The teacher must also practice what he teaches, since he is a model and a reference to his students for guidance because any imperfection in what he teaches will result into his students not benefiting from what he teaches. On this Imaam Shaafi'i remarks that knowledge is not that which is preserved, rather knowledge is that which is benefited. Therefore, the faults of a teacher are a heavy loss that brings about such harms, which are followed by the students.

According to Ibn Jama'ah, (2006) the teacher is also obliged to preserve the optional prayers and rites of Sharia both verbal and practice. He should regularly recite al-Quran; ponder over its meanings, commands, prohibitions, good tidings, frightful tidings, alongside observing its boundaries and limits and guarding against its forgetfulness after committing it to memory. He should continuously praise Allah from heart and by tongue; it is better advises Ibn Jama'ah to have fixed prayers and praises every day or on alternate day or on Wednesdays and Fridays. He is as well expected to observe other prayers and praises for the night and day, optional fasting, practice prayers for the holy Prophet because his love, respect and honor is a must when his honorable name is mentioned.

Ibn Jama'ah (2006) further asserts that, Knowledge acquisition is a continuous process for the teacher, he can learn even from the lower. The teacher is also encouraged to involve himself in the activities of composition and collection of materials and publication since they lead him to the realities of different branches of arts and its intricacies, which need a great deal of research, study, criticism and reference, which in turn plants the memory, purifies the heart, sharpens the mind, beautifies the expression, earns good reputation and plenty of rewards and makes the memory of the author live forever.

It is further enlightened by Ibn Jama'ah (2006) that before the teacher enters classroom for teaching, he should honour the excellence of knowledge and Sharia by purifying himself. After having prepared for teaching, the teacher should offer two Raka'at for desiring good and he must intend to impart knowledge and its teaching and to spread the ordinances of Allah. On exiting his house the teacher, should perform the prayer over the Prophet and seek refuge in Allah lest he gets misguided or he misguides.

Even the way the teacher sits is an important aspect of a successful teaching-learning process. According to Ibn Jama'ah, the teacher should sit facing the Kaabah if possible, with grace, calmness and humility. Besides that, the teacher should guard against his eyes from suspicious looking, he should also avoid joking and laughing, because much laughing decreases the reverence of the teacher and causes his dignity to fall. The teacher should not teach when feeling hungry, thirsty, sorrow, angry grief, very cold or very hot, as these circumstances impede proper thinking. The teacher should sit in-front of all the audience and show respect for the more knowledgeable, aged and honoured and should acknowledge the respect and honour of the great

scholars of Islam. He should pay attention to the people moderately according to their need though he may prefer one who asks or talks or discusses with him, whether he is younger or a common person.

As one of the fundamentals of a lesson, Ibn Jama'ah (2006) advises that start should be made with the recitation from the Book of Allah and pray for the mercy over the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and his family and his companions and seek Allah's pleasure for the common Muslims and for their leaders and their teachers. Then, he prays for himself, for the audience and their parents and those who are staying at the school with good intension. If there are numerous lessons, the teacher starts with the more superior or more important to the less superior or less important. On the method of delivering a lecture, Ibn Jama'ah elucidates that, the teacher should prolong a lesson only up to that extent which ought to be covered and stop where ought to be stopped and he should provide answers to the questions asked in that particular seating. During his lesson, the teacher neither speak louder nor in a lower voice; his voice should neither exceed the class nor should be too low to be listened by the audience.

The teacher should ease students learning according to Ibn Jama'ah by showing kindness in their comprehension particularly when they deserve praise of good conduct and excellence, by not denying eminent aspects of knowledge to the gifted student. Similarly, he should not teach the less gifted beyond the scope of their comprehension. It is preferred that on delivering a lecture, he starts with theorems and then their simple explanation with examples and arguments, although, in case of capable students he will mention the root of the theorem, its arguments, the reasons and philosophy behind it, its branches, origins, and the objections raised by scholars concerning its authority. On concluding the explanation, the teacher should pose questions to students to examine their comprehension and to preserve the explanation given, this can also be strengthened by asking students to form groups to assist them recapitulate their lessons among themselves.

Besides admission of a test to find the student's ability, it is the work of the teacher to advise the student to change to another subject in which he will be more successful, even though the teacher still has to discuss before the students the basic principles of the subject which do not change and should mention as well the original sources of knowledge, however, this can only be performed if the teacher is well versed in those branches of knowledge, otherwise, a teacher should be confined to his specialization.

Ibn Jama'ah (2006) once more opine that the teacher is obliged to look after students etiquettes, manners and conducts, both hidden and open, as he should as well enquire about the absentees by even sending one of the students or himself pay a visit to find out what happened. Next to that, the teacher will struggle for the well fare of the students, for soothing their heats and deals with all of them with humility, addresses them with their first name and meets them with a smiling face.

Ibn Jama'ah (2006) continued to remind the teacher that, the sole purpose of gathering for the lesson is the prominence of knowledge and purity of hearts; hence, the teacher should not indulge in envy and grudge which will breed enmity and hatred. Therefore, it is upon the teacher to condemn bad manners not becoming of a student since such actions can spoil the classroom atmosphere. Preservation of justice by the teacher during discussion is another important aspect. Here the teacher should listen to the audience irrespective of their status and should show love and affection even to strangers and receive them with smile to make them feel at home. Alongside that, keeping in view of the welfare of the class in timing is a crucial feature of teaching, which should put into consideration the learner's convenience.

Though the lesson starts and concludes by remembering Allah's name by uttering Allah knows better, the process of learning is still incomplete unless the learner observes manners concerning himself, his teacher, lesson and fellow students.

On student's manners concerning himself Ibn Jama'ah (2006) emphasizes that the student is obliged to purify his heart from every sort of impurities to enable him acquire and preserve knowledge. This is because when the heart is pure for acquiring knowledge, then its blessing and production will be vivid. Purity of heart is not sufficient, sincerity of intention is a necessity too, where by the student should intend to seek Allah's pleasure, to act according to it, to revive Sharia, to enlighten his heart, to seek Allah's nearness on the Day of Judgment and to struggle to achieve what Allah has prepared for those who possess knowledge, thus, the student will invest his prime age and precious time in pursuit of knowledge.

Ibn Jama'ah (2006) further stresses that the student should be contented with whatever he gets for his maintenance and survival as this unites the sides of heart from separated hopes and consequently the springs of wisdom leap from it. The wise student uses his time properly when acquiring knowledge and he constantly struggle to acquire knowledge and understand it. He adopts abstinence in all his affairs, takes lawful foods and clothing and minimizes edibles that cause laziness and weaknesses of senses, cause phlegm and takes foods Allah has produced for the sharpness of mind, minimizes sleep by not exceeding eight hours during the day and night, he adopts moderation in sexual intercourse, only to release the excess semen in order to elevate and purify the mind. It is affirmed by Ibn Jama'ah that recreation at pure places is allowed, however he stressed that association with other gender should strictly be avoided and when acquiring friends should look for pious, religious, intelligent and those whom he can benefit from.

On top of the student's manners with the teacher and his obligations concerning his respect, Ibn Jama'ah states that, the student should seek Allah's guidance when choosing a teacher from whom he will receive knowledge, learn good manners and etiquettes, because he will obey him in all cases without deviating from his view and order; he seeks his opinion for what he wants to do and guess his pleasure in all affairs and tries his best in his honor and seek Allah's nearness by the virtue of his service. Apart from that, the student should respect his teacher and put full trust in him. It is upon the student to patiently bear the oppression of his teacher if any for any reason and should instead express gratitude and appreciation to him as a sign of honor as this alerts the student for his shortcomings. The student has to recognize the rights of the teacher and should not ignore his excellence, guard against his honor, defend him against blames in his absence and should always pray for him and take care of his offspring, his kith and kin after his death.

On entering upon the teacher, Ibn Jama'ah emphasizes that the student should not enter upon the teacher in other than his general meeting except with his permission whether sitting alone or with someone else. During the lesson the student sits politely in front of the teacher with humility, and pay full attention to him, even though he knows or he has ever heard what the teacher explains, and he will neither precede the teacher in answering a question, neither will he head him in it nor will he expose his knowledge or understanding unless otherwise asked by the teacher. In case when questioning and answering questions, the student should address the teacher politely, and when receiving or giving anything from the teacher, it is advised that he uses his right hand. Whenever the student happens to walk with the teacher, he should be in his front at night and behind him during the day.

According to Ibn Jama'ah, the student too has to follow a particular method if he is to succeed in his learning. In his method the student should start with the Holy Quran, then Hadith and its related sciences and then other branches of knowledge. It is stressed by Ibn Jama'ah that the student should avoid indulgence in controversies of Ulama and common people and the use of various references as he can get diverted from his prime aim, which he will encounter after his scholarship is established. In addition to that, he should not look down upon his teacher because it is an act of ignorance, and he must attend all lectures and other gatherings, and it is preferred that besides listening to lectures he should make notes, because mere listening is a sign of short sightedness of intension that eventually leads to failure and laziness of awakening. On entering the meeting of the teacher or dispersing, he will say Salam loudly and more so to the teacher with respect.

Another important aspect of the student's method is holding discussions at night most preferably after Isha prayers, and he deals with his colleagues with politeness and honour and he should not be shy asking in case he has difficulties understanding, though it is important that he has to wait for his turn otherwise permission is to be sought from the turn owner he wants to take. Books are one of the most important tools of learning, it is therefore upon the seeker of knowledge to acquire them though purchase or otherwise, thus lending of books is a noble act.

On choosing a school Ibn Jama'ah advises that the one with a pious teacher, who is authoritative, excellent, with wisdom, glory, justice, loves the learned scholars, kind to the weak, associates with those who love and are in service of knowledge and is farther from heresy should be chosen. After making the right choice, the student is expected to stay according to the stipulated regulations of the school; he should avoid sitting at the gate of the school, peeping other homes, attending lectures lately and should avoid all bad habits during the lesson, besides choosing the best students in conduct as friends and neighbors. Although Ibn Jama'ah lived almost a century after al-Ghazali, there is no significant differences on their views as far as the method is concerned.

Al Ghazzali's Approach to Learning:

Like Ibn Jama'ah, al-Ghazzali's in *Ihya Ulum Din* (Fazlur Karim, Trans.1983) his focus was not directed to the specific method; to him the process is crucial for teaching and learning to be successful. Consequently, al-Ghazali deliberated a lot on the manners to be observed by both teachers and students, whereby they are expected to exhibit high moral standards for the learning and teaching process to be blessed by Almighty Allah.

Like Ibn Jama'ah, it is the duty of a student according to al-Ghazali to purify his mind and actions with virtues, to gain proximity to God and his angels and to live in the company of those who live near him and to avoid bad habits and evil matters, because knowledge acquisition is the worship of the mind. Al Ghazali adds that a student should keep attention to primary object of knowledge, whose goal is God and nothing else but Him.

Further still al-Ghazali concurs with Ibn Jama'ah on student's reduction of his worldly affairs, to the extent that al-Ghazali stresses that he should keep away from his kith and kin because such an environment is not conducive for knowledge acquisition. Besides that, the student should not exalt himself over the teacher, but should entrust to him the conduct of his affairs and submit to his advises as a patient submits to a physician. On emphasizing this, al Ghazali quotes a tradition of the Prophet where a believer can never flatter anyone except when seeking knowledge.

Al-Ghazali again agrees with Ibn Jama'ah that the student should not pay attention to Mazhabs or sects because such will perplex his mind. However al-Ghazali is of the opinion that a student should not miss any

branch of knowledge, he should instead try to become perfect in all branches, since they are interrelated and strengthen the learning of one another, though al-Ghazali makes it clear that since the student has limited time, he should take up the most important ones first, which should be very well mastered before proceeding to the new branches.

The student is also obliged to be aware of the causes for which noble sciences are known. Al-Ghazali enlightens that, it can be known from two things; nobility of its fruits and authenticity of its principles. It is further elucidated by al-Ghazali that, the fruits of the sciences of religion is to gain an eternal life and the fruits of the other, is to gain a temporary life; hence, the science of religion is more noble as its results are nobler.

Al-Ghazali holds the same opinion like Ibn Jama'ah that the process of knowledge acquisition is incomplete unless the teacher abides by some principles as well, on which both shared similar views. Even these principles were termed by al-Ghazali as duties for the same reasons like in the case of manners to be observed by the student.

The first duty of the teacher according to al-Ghazali is to show kindness to the student just like his own children, since his object is to protect them from hell fire, thus his duties are more than those of parents. Though the father is the immediate cause of his ephemeral life, his teacher is the cause of immortal life. The teacher is to follow the usages and ways of the Prophet, not to withhold any advice from the student and to dissuade them from evil ways with care, caution, and sympathy, not with rebuke and harshness.

The teacher is not to disparage the value of other sciences before his students, but should prepare them for their learning. Al-Ghazali stresses that the teacher should teach his students up to the power of their understanding and should teach the slow learners only such things clear and suited to their understanding, and on top of that, he should practice what he teaches. These were the same legacies held by az-Zarnuji, though he introduced the psychological approach to the learning process, which should not be interpreted as differing from his predecessor, in fact Az-Zarnuji himself stressed the importance of putting trust in Allah when seeking knowledge.

Az-Zarnuji's Methodology:

Az-Zarnuji's putting emphasis on student's method did not imply negligent of the teacher's conduct in knowledge acquisition. He was justified since his major objective was to guide the students to the right path of knowledge acquisition, which he noticed striving to attain knowledge, but failing to do so, hence not reaping its uses and benefits, which he attributed to the abandonment of conditions on which knowledge acquisition is based.

Although az-Zarnuji (1947) speaks in terms of methodology, it was not his major focus like his predecessors. His approach is process based, constituting a number of steps to be followed by those seeking knowledge in order to benefit from it. Consequently, Az-Zarnuji stressed that knowledge acquisition is a long life process with limited time, therefore, he agrees with al-Ghazali and Ibn Jama'ah and reaffirms that it is necessary to choose the most beneficial branches of learning according to the stage reached in religious development. Like Ibn Jama'ah, az-Zarnuji also advises a student to choose the most learned, pious and the most advanced in years, though al-Ghazali caution that this may result into pride with knowledge.

Az-Zarnuji further agrees with his pioneers on respect of knowledge and those who poses it and asserts that one does not acquire knowledge and profit from it unless he holds in esteem knowledge and those who poses it, as a result one must venerate and glorify the teacher. Furthermore, earnestness, perseverance and assiduity are inseparable in the quest of knowledge, and one should put his trust in God, as one ought to be industrious, assiduous, reduce food intake, pray at night and always recite Al-Quran to strengthen memory. On the amount of study in the initial stages, az-Zarnuji share similar views with al-Ghazali and Ibn Jama'ah and adds that it should be what the learner can retain in his memory after repetition, and besides that he affirms that the possessor of knowledge is sympathetic and helpful rather than jealousy, for envy is injurious to him. The method of learning continued to attract the attention of Muslim educators even after az-Zarnuji, more works were produced and that of Ibn Khaldun being the most prominent.

Ibn Khaldun's Methodology:

Ibn Khaldun's (1980) sociological approach should not be interpreted as a diverting from earlier Muslim educators on the principles of knowledge acquisition; he only approached learning from a sociological aspect, on top of which lies the intention of knowledge acquisition, which is none other than attaining Allah's pleasure coped with high moral standards. He stressed the instruction of children in the Quran as a symbol of Islam, which imbues their hearts with firm belief in Islam and its articles of faith, arguing that, the Quran is the foundation of all habits that may be acquired later on.

Ibn Khaldun's period witnessed scholars turning to brief methods and contents of the sciences systematically in form of brief programs for each science, whose procedure involved a great deal of works for the student. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun too, stressed the gradual presentation of principle problems within each chapter of a discipline with repetitions, giving commentaries and explanation on the existing differences of

opinions at advanced levels, but he cautioned that, the teacher should not ask more from a student than what he understands from the book he studies. Ibn Khaldun further elucidated methods which were used in Maghrib, Spain and Africa, and advised that the teacher must not be too harsh towards his pupils.

Even though Ibn Khaldun stressed that God guides in His mercy and knowledge comes from Him, his approach to learning was more inclined to method and content even though he agreed with his predecessors on some principles, his way did not lay emphasis on the importance of manners to be observed by teacher and student as in the case of al-Ghazali, ibn Jama'ah and az-Zarnuji. This is evidenced in his writing when he explicates that many teachers of his time were ignorant of the effective method of instruction, in which he was referring to specific methods of teaching

Conclusion:

The fact that the Quran and Sunnah stressed and even applied specific methods in conveying the revealed message does not mean that they are sufficient by themselves, in fact, they are just aids that play a significant and necessary role in getting across the intended message across recipients. In an ideal Islamic education system, the major objective of knowledge acquisition is to gain Allah's pleasure in order to draw closer to him. However a morally bankrupt person will never attain closeness to Allah. Consequently, Islamic education promotes the premise of a process of learning with students and teachers observing specific manners in order to get Allah's blessing in acquiring knowledge. This is why prominent Muslim educators like al-Ghazali, Ibn Jama'ah and even az-Zarnuji stressed the aspect of high moral standards for both the seeker and dispenser of knowledge and they considered them inseparable entities to the extent that if one lacks the necessary requirements it renders the whole system of knowledge acquisition ineffective, hence, its failure in producing an effective vicegerent.

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