THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROBING QUESTIONS STRATEGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THINKING SKILLS IN THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION COURSES USING A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIYADH

Dr. Adel Ayed AL Magthwi
Assistant Professor of Education,
Majmaah University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Importance of the study: Current study may be useful for Islamic education teachers to improve their performance in light of using of probing questions strategy for Teaching Islamic education courses and the development of thinking among the students of the middle stage, and not only on the using of strategies such as the lecture for the development of only memorization and recall skills.

The present study aimed to:

1. Enhanced knowledge of the reality of teaching practices and exercise enhanced probing questions strategy by teachers of middle stage.
2. Enhanced knowledge of the effectiveness of probing questions strategy in the development of thinking in Islamic Education courses at a sample of the middle stage students in Riyadh.

The problem of the study is concentrated on the following question: What is the effectiveness of probing questions strategy in the development of thinking skills in the courses of Islamic Education at a sample of the preparatory grade students in Riyadh?

The researcher was able to formulate the following null hypotheses to answer her main question:

1. There is no difference statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average post-test scores for the experimental group and control group in the skills of thinking.

To ensure the correct of hypotheses of the study The researcher was able to use the experimental method on a sample deliberate of students from third grade of preparatory school number of students: (59) student applied them to the experience of the study and the researcher prepared the test for measuring

thinking skills, as used retail mid-term to ensure the validity of this test and its reliability by the application of tribal for them at the two study groups, as was applied to the two groups after the completion of the experiment, while the test was used (T-Test) as a way to statistically processing the results and see significant differences between the two groups.
The study resulted in:

1. There are significant differences between the average degrees of post-test for two groups in the level of skills of thinking in favor of the group experimental.

In light of the results of the study, the researcher recommended a number of recommendations including:

1. The education departments of the Ministry of Education conduct some training courses for teachers in various disciplines about the teaching strategies of using the probing questions strategy; and the development of thinking that is done on a regular basis to include all parameters.
2. Training the teachers of all subjects to develop the levels of thinking of students and to be done on a regular basis to include all teachers.

Keywords : Probing Questions, Thinking Skills

Introduction

The aim of Islamic Education is to build the physical, mental, spiritual, and social perspective of an integrated Muslim. However, the most important objective of this education is pushing the individual towards meditation and reflection in attaining the stage of self-certainty. The use of one's mind as well as thoughts about the creations of God, and understanding the realities of existence are foregrounded actions of the Islamic faith. They are the means by which human beings discover and understand the laws of the universe and yield to them for their own delight. However, the practice of Islamic Education is the way to know the Creator and strengthen the doctrine of the Islamic faith. In fact, Islam's supports the use of the mind, and the functions entrusted to it do not differentiate between using it to understand the universe, or to reflect on the book of Allah's Quran.

Meditating and thinking are the individual's path way to certainty. Thus, the Quran classifies good thinking and discernment of the universe as the greatest source of faith in Allah. To better understand the Quran, its verses, and its implications, it requires a Muslim to thoughtfully learn as much verses as possible to the extent he/she becomes well-trained on how to ponder on the Quranic text. By this, Muslims achieve the aim of the Islamic education. Thinking is a mental formation that allows a Muslim to handle the Book of Allah (the Almighty) in reading and listening, as well as in

understanding its content. This is aimed at defending the faith by revealing the fallacies and fabrications of the enemies of Islam.

Education provides students with the opportunity to think, especially because these students are the pillars of tomorrow. Presently, this has become the most important educational concern to all Arab and Islamic countries. Therefore, this is so because of the challenges facing Arab and Islamic nations in the era of globalization, intellectual invasion, blatant interference in their religious curricula, extremism and terrorism, and other challenges. These issues entail raising the awareness of students by developing their thinking skills, and enabling them to deal with religious and non-religious texts. The role entrusted to the teacher today is not just in transferring knowledge and teaching learners, but also in guiding and facilitating the learning process. However, this process does not mean leaving students to learn on their own, but rather that the teachers needs to foster their learning by inciting and pushing them to interact with important topics. Furthermore, there is no single way of teaching which fits all areas of knowledge, or which is appropriate for all students. A successful teacher however is someone who uses a variety of methods to help students achieve a lot during the learning process.

The common practice of teachers shows the use of questions to accomplish dialogue in the classroom. They exploit most time in delivering different ideas relying on questions, answers, and comments. Most classic and modern teaching methods rely on questions to explain the topics of study. Hence, classroom questions are one of the most commonly used methods in the educational process given their importance in raising, sustaining, and verifying the mental abilities of students. This would also enable the teacher to acquire more knowledge by learning from the answers that was given. This is what we call the probing questions which are the focus of this research paper (Rabadi, Insaf, 2007: p. 5-6).

The Research Question

How effective is the strategy of using probing questions in the development of thinking skills in Islamic education courses using a sample of second-grade intermediate school students?

Hypotheses

1. There is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average pre-test scores for the experimental group and the control group in the skills of thinking.
2. There is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average post-test scores for the experimental group and the control group in the skills of thinking

Limitation

This study is limited by the following:

1. A sample of second-grade students of an intermediate school in Riyadh.
2. Some thinking skills and the corresponding Islamic Education course (Skills of understanding the Quranic text), which are as follows:

A. Inference Skills
B. Refocusing skill
C. Interpretation skill
D. Induction skill

Tools of the Study

A. A questionnaire for teachers before applying the experience of the study to identify the level of their ability to use the strategy of probing questions.

B. Testing the thinking skills in understanding the Quranic text.

Objectives of the Study

This present study aims to:

1. know the reality of Islamic education teachers use of probing questions strategy and their mastery of such strategy.
2. Investigate the effect of probing questions on the development of thinking skills in Islamic education courses in a sample of second-grade students from an intermediate school.

Importance of the Study

The importance of carrying this study is manifest in the following points:

1. This study may benefit Islamic education teachers in intermediate school classrooms in improving their performance when using the probing questions strategy in the teaching of Islamic education and in the development of thinking skills.
2. This study may benefit Islamic education curricula developers in the preparation and development of activities, guidelines, and proposals to ensure the formulation of a content, while respecting the relationship between the use of probing questions in teaching and the development of thinking skills.
3. Determine the level of intermediate school students in thinking skills.
4. Enlighten those who teach Islamic education on the importance of training students on how to understand the Quranic text.
5. The present study may be useful in providing teachers with new ways to help them increase the academic achievement of male and female students,

as well as inciting them to think and develop their thinking skills in other areas.

Concepts of the Study

-Probing Questions

Probing questions as defined by Insaf Rabadi (2007: 11) "are the sequential questions provided by the teacher after a student answers a question, and they might include a new formulation or hints intended to guide the student to obtain the correct answers or improve the quality of the answers".

As a researcher, I procedurally define probing questions as the type of questions posed by the teacher after the initial response to a question was previously posed. This is done so that the student amends, corrects, completes, justifies or confirms his answer, link it to previous knowledge, or transfer it to other classmates to achieve mutual active participation. Therefore, this helps them to obtain more in-depth answers and increase their thinking level.

-Thinking Skills

Barakat defines thinking skills as "the student's ability to deal with situations, events, and educational stimuli vigilantly, and to analyze such situations and events in depth and with care to make the right decision at the right time and place in achieving the expected goals" (Barakat, Ziad, 2005: 108).

Theoretical Framework and Literature

First Research Area: Probing Questions

Classroom probing questions are questions that help students solve the problems they face during the learning process. They are one of the most important means used by the teacher to excite students' thinking and learning. They are also entrance which saturates the individual's tendency to search and carry out investigation, and the teacher sees them as an assessment of his work and the achievement of others (Jamal, Mohammed Jihad 2005: 206)**.**

Therefore, the above definitions show the consensus of educators that probing questions share the following characteristics:

• Depends on the initial answer of the student and uses it as a starting point for the next question.

F• ocus on the effectiveness of the student by exciting his thinking and ability to recognize relationships between content elements, and through the teacher's adoption of the student's answer in dialogue management and in addressing the discussed topics.

Probing Questions Categories

There are several types of probing questions by which educators express different opinions in classifying them;

Insaf Rabadi (2007: 24) classified them into two types:

1 .Prompting Probing Question
2. Illustrative Probing Questions

Nabhan, Yahia (2008: pp. 90-91) divides them into three sections:

1. Switch probing
2. Refocusing probing
3. Direct probing

Samurai et al. (2000: 42) classified them into four types:

1. Prompting Probing
2. Illustrative Probing
3. Switch Probing
4. Refocusing Probing

Saada Jawdat et al. (2006: pp. 260-269), Nabhan, Yahia (2008: pp. 70-72), and Younis wafa (2007: 259-260) divided them into five types:

1. Clarification Probing Question
2. Prompting Probing Question
3. Refocusing Probing Question
4. Switch Probing Question
5. Critical Probing Question

Prompting Probing Questions: Probing questions share the following characteristics:

1. Helps to rectify the student's answer without resorting to the use of corporal punishment or to sentences repulsive of values.
2. Calls for the development of the initial responses of the student.
3. Helps in the in-depth analysis of the content of its multiple elements such as facts, concepts, principles, laws and theories, and recognizing the relationships between them.
4. Expansion of the base of the participating students, especially when using the switch or refocusing probing questions.
5. All of them are thought-provoking, and they encourage active participation on the part of students.
6. The role of the teacher involves being a director, guider, and a thought-provoker.
7 .Encourage to delve deeper into the subject matter or issue being discussed, leading to a better understanding by the students.
8. Ranked among the most successful patterns of the questions that the teacher can use in the skill of asking questions and investigation.

9 .Reveal the strengths and weaknesses of both the cognitive and participatory aspects of learning of both the teachers and students (Saada Jawdat et al., 2006: 270-271).

Consequently, thinking is a continuous mental process, carried out by human beings as long as his mind is intact, particularly when they are exposed to a dilemma or when they wish to make gain. It is affected by culture, experience, the environment, and the circumstances surrounding them. However, it benefits people in solving problems and in decision-making.

Based on the above definitions, it is clear that the constituent elements of the thinking process are:

1. Complex cognitive processes (such as problem solving) and less complex processes (understanding, application, and reasoning), supra-cognitive direction and control operations.
2. Special knowledge of the content or subject.
3. Preparations and personal factors (trends, needs, tendencies).

The tremendous changes the world is witnessing and the challenges that Islam and Muslims are facing which is jeopardizing the fundamentals of faith, enjoins us to give our students thinking skills. This skill serves as a set of tools for the individual who needs to deal effectively with any type of information or variables that comes in the future. “Educational institutions have to accustom students with the use of their mental abilities, and equip them with the necessary thinking and working skills to diagnose the reality in which they live as individuals and groups, in the family, city, clubs, and in the community. (Ahmad Mahdi Abdel Halim, 2004: 183)

The Importance of Developing Thinking Skills

Many educational institutions are keen to set up integrated and effective programs of study which include the training of teachers to implement these programs efficiently. They fulfill the different requirements from technology to workshops to equip teachers with skills to enable them to fulfill their mission and carry out their duties of achieving a number of key objectives, such as the creation of desirable changes in students’ behavior, and the development of their skills and ways of thinking, as well as building balanced characters in students.

The creative teacher is one who can plan an educational position based on a set of integrated and organized behavioral objectives, and work to achieve them through active multilateral interaction to be evident through:

- Quiet and serious dialogue between all the interlocutors in the hall.
- The ability to understand the needs of the students and work to satisfy and meet them.
- Build human relationships based on friendship and mutual respect.

- Build the student's self-confidence to play their role without disturbance.
- Equip students with skills that could benefit them in dealing with issues of life successfully.
- Care to take into account individual differences among students.
- Application of methods and tools to suit the level of the students and their ability to think.
- Graduation in addressing the goals from easy to difficult.
- Complementarity between cognitive, emotional, skills-related and social goals, to bring about a change in behavior and in the modes of thinking (AL Khadra, Fadia 2004: 142-145).

Relationship Between Thinking Skills and Probing Questions

Probing questions depends on leading students gradually to the correct answer, and to the interpretation and critique of each answer to make it easier for the student to correct his/her mistakes and reach the correct generalization. They also work in analyzing the dimensions of knowledge and connecting previous and current learning. Thus, reflective thinking as well, is based on the same principles. Students are pushed to participate in the thinking session by stimulating them with certain ambiguity or by formulating a specific problem. The teacher can hence use probing questions as a way of stimulating students in classroom interaction and effective reflection. The interrogative method guides students towards different thinking skills, and gets them to answer the questions (Why?, how?, and what happens when you make specific decisions?)

Furthermore, the development of thinking skills using probing questions helps in providing students with the following characteristics (Abdul Hadi and Mustafa 2001: 219):

- Concentration and accuracy.
- The use of logical analysis and interpretation.
- Extract results from insufficient information in some cases.
- The need to retrieve information on an ongoing basis, and connect evident information with each other to reach the underlying reasons related to the problem or situation to be thought of.
- Draw conclusions, categorize, and review it for authenticity.

Relationships Between the Skills of Understanding the Quranic Text and the Thinking Skills

The relationship between the skills of understanding the Quranic text and the thinking skills goes back to the fact that both are the results of mental operations carried out by the individual. The difference between them lies in the kind of experience that will help the thinking individual in understanding

the Quranic text in general and in dealing with other religious and non-religious texts. One can combine the two by training on non-religious texts, and then try to apply the acquired skills and mental processes on religious texts, or vice versa. Hence, the learning effect is transferred, depending on the combination of both experiences with religious and non-religious texts.

The follower of the thinking skills addressed by researchers and theorists of thought processes and skills found that they resemble those skills or rules referred to by the exegetes of Quran. The refocusing skill means the existence of a link between two things in the form of one occurring before or after the other, or in a sequential and steady manner. Symmetry relationship means the existence of a partial or substantial analogy between a couple of concepts or things, causal relationships, which means the existence of a link between the two things, or any other relationships and links (Jerwan, Fathi, 2005: 223). All of these issues were discussed by exegetes and Islamic jurisprudence specialists. When interpreting, Quran exegetes start with a rule which is a skill in thinking and understanding the Quranic text, and is "the link of a Quranic sentence with the subject of Surah and its objective association with other verses in the Qur'an." They believe that the scrutinizer of Allah's words has to look for the link between a meaning learned from one Quranic sentence with the other meanings scattered in the text and which share the same topic. Every particular meaning learned from a Quranic sentence has a link with the other meanings scattered in the text, that share the topic, and which has another close link with the meaning of the other sentences in the Verse. The verse itself has a close link with the thematic unity of the text (Hanbaqa, Ibrahim 1400 AH: 9). In addition, there are sequential links in the Quran. The night and the day are mentioned sequentially, and the same is true for bliss and torment as well as faith and good works.

The skill of interpretation as a thinking skills means "processing, analyzing information and drawing conclusions, identifying implications, giving meaning to experience and justifying it" (Jerwan, Fathi 2005, p. 319). It is very much like the skill of interpreting the Quranic text, which at the linguistic level means exposition, disclosure, and illustrating sense. In the convention of exegetes, interpreting looks at how to pronounce the words of Quran, their meanings and provisions at unit and sentence level, and the connotative meanings as well (Al-Qattan, Manna 1405 AH: 323-324).

Azzarkashi defines exegesis as "the science by which we understand the Koran and explain its meanings and extract its provisions and wisdoms (Zarkashi, Tom 2, D.t: 174).

The aim of exegetes and interpreters is to have access to all the meanings that the Quran (the subject of exegesis and interpretation) can

convey regardless of its kind, whether linguistic, dogmatic, historical, doctrinal, moral, or emotional (Saleh, Aiman, 2005: 37).

As for the skill of induction, it is a mental process aimed at reaching conclusions or generalizations. Induction by nature seeks to explore the rules and laws (Jerwan, Fathi 2005: 319), especially as thinking skills is widely used in Sharia Sciences and provisions. When the Fakih wants to reach a doctrinal rule, he extrapolates or reads in the traces of religious texts, and then concludes the rule. For example, the rule of “there should be neither harm nor malice,” is one of the five major rules, which is the cornerstone of Islamic theology. However, upon this rule, a lot of branches and issues in the various sections of *fikh* are built.

The base of the rule of "you should do neither harm nor malice," is a strong Hadith with a trusted chain of narrators agreed upon among scientists. What is intended by doing neither harm nor malice is forbidding in harming someone without a just reason. The reader of Quran sees clearly the significance of this rule as in verse 231 of Surat AL Baqara which states that, "When ye divorce women, and they are about to fulfill the term of their Iddat, either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to injure them or to take undue advantage of them". The prevention of magic falls under this rule is harmful and implies the damage of a third party without a just right. Hence, the same applies to adulterated medication because it is harmful and damaging to others, and also, many other issues that falls under this rule (Saidan, Walid bin Rashid, D.t: 8).

The skill of inference is one of the thinking skills that reflect a mental process including organizing facts or information, and processing them in a manner that leads to a conclusion, decision, or problem solving. There is also what is called logical inference, which means the thinking process based on specific rules and strategies aimed at generating new knowledge. Thus, this skill can be used to demonstrate the legal provisions of Sharia, and can be used to demonstrate matters on faith.

Procedures of the Study

First: The Community of the Study and its Sample

The application of the current study is limited to a deliberate sample composed of 65 students from an intermediate second grade class divided into two groups. The first group is the experimental group made up of 33 students who were taught using the probing questions method, while the other group is the control group made up of 32 students who were taught in the traditional way.

The Study Field

I adopted the design of equal groups which requires the presence of two groups (experimental and control groups). The first group is exposed to the independent variable (probing questions strategy), while the second group is taught in the traditional manner. This is as shown in Table (1).

N	Group	A priori test	Independent variable	A Posteriori test
1	Experimental group	Thinking skills in understanding Quranic text	Probing questions strategy	Thinking skills in understanding the Quranic text
2	Control group		Traditional method	

Group	Number	Arithmetic Average	Standard deviation	T Value	
Experimental	32	11.2188	2.91530	Calculated	Tabular
Control	33	11.1212	2.65468	0.141	1.999

The test shows no statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05); and so, the two groups are equal in the assessment of the thinking Skills in the understanding of the Quranic text. However, this means that the two groups have begun to learn from almost the same level of thinking, and therefore, any change that may occur at the level of students can be attributed to the effect of the experimental variable (probing questions strategy).

Thus, the first hypothesis states that:

"There is no statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of $\alpha \geq 0.05$ in the a priori test of the thinking skills meant to understand the Quranic text."

Carrying Out the Experiment

I developed the teaching plans to implement the strategy of probing questions along with the classic teaching plans. I provided teachers of Islamic education with some training sessions for clarification and training on how to practice a strategy of probing questions. Also, I was in constant contact with the teachers of the subject.

After the a priori test of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text, the application of the experience lasted for eight weeks at the rate of two sessions per week for both groups (experimental and control group). At the end of the experiment, students of both groups sat for the same test in order to verify the validity of the second hypothesis on the development of thinking skills in the understanding of the Quranic text.

Results of the Study and Discussion

Having taught the two groups according to the two teaching methods, and having applied the test of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text, the responses of the sample were corrected and analyzed statistically.

Results of the Second Hypothesis

I calculated the average scores of students' a posteriori test of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text. The experimental group was taught using probing questions strategy, while the control group was studied using the traditional method. Using two samples of t-test for independent samples, the difference between the average score of the two groups was statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) and the independence degree was 63. Thus, this is in favor of the experimental group. Table 3 illustrates the result.

Table 3

Group	Number	Arithmetic Average	Deviation Standard	T Value	
Experimental	32	13.8125	3.21727	Calculated	Tabular
Control	33	11.3636	2.57170	3.395	1.999

This result suggests the superiority of the experimental group which used the strategy of probing questions over the control group.

However, hypothesis zero is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that:

"There are significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) between the average scores of the experimental and the control group students in the a posteriori application of the test on the skills to understand the Quranic text. The difference was in favor of the experimental group."

Discussion of Results

The difference between the average students' scores in the a posteriori test of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text in the research groups was in favor of the experimental group which was taught using the strategy of probing questions. This advantage is due to the fact that:

1. probing questions were used in different positions for multiple purposes:

*To clarify or increase the level of thinking skills
*To upgrade students' answers to a higher mental level
*To re-focus on answers and achieve accuracy and validity,
* To reduce the generalizations that are not supported
*To achieve customization

*To justify and strengthen the evidence to confirm the answer, and help Students contribute in increasing participation in the probing thinking and situations organized by the teacher
*Ability to infer (refocusing relations, Interpretation) induction of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text.
2. The probing questions work to back-up dialogue and interaction between the teacher and the student of the initial response until the latter by himself reaches the correct answer or complete the lack of response, infer something specific, and show the correlation between two things. All this was reflected on the student's responses in the test of thinking skills to understand the Quranic text

Recommendations and Suggestions

In the light of the results of the study, the following recommendations and suggestions were provided:

Recommendations

1 .Greater use of the strategy of probing questions in Islamic Education in all its branches because they contribute to the development of thinking skills.
2 .Training students on each of the skills of understanding the Quranic text, as well as other thinking skills in view of the impact not only in the area of student achievement in the understanding of the Quranic text, but also with other subjects.
3 .When teaching students, the interpretation of Quran focus on understanding and in avoiding memorization and remembrance. Traditionally, students are pushed to memorize what they learn, without giving them the opportunity to participate in the operations of eliciting implicit and explicit meanings from the Quranic text.
4 .Take advantage of educational programs offered to students like Quranic interpretations which will help them acquire the skills to understand the Quranic text and thus gain associated thinking skills.

Suggestion

To complement the current research, the following studies should be conducted:
1. The effect of using the strategy of probing questions on the achievement of pupils in the first cycle of basic education in the courses of Islamic education.
2 .Designing training programs in skills of understanding the Quranic text for intermediate school students, and study their impact on the development of their thinking skills and in their understanding of the Quranic text.

3 Conduct similar studies to highlight the relationship between thinking skills and skills gained in other courses, such as science of Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence.
4. Conduct research and studies to analyze the paths of thinking adopted by diligent scholars of jurisprudence, as well as scholars in interpretation and Hadith. Take advantage of such studies in developing the skills to understand the Quranic text, and including it in the programs and courses of Islamic education.

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