

Education and Curricular Perspectives in the Quran

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I attempt to find elements of education and curricular perspective in the Qur'an. I argue that there is little research in the field of curriculum instruction that discusses the Qur'an's educational aspects and, as a result, much ignorance of the Qur'an's material that deals with education and curricular perspective in the Qur'an. Researchers may find many materials that deal with reading, memorizing, and reciting the Qur'an, along with references that deal with science and math in the Qur'an. Therefore, this dissertation answers the question: What curriculum exists within the Quran? This dissertation is divided into five chapters exploring various aspects of the curriculum. The word "curriculum" is used in one chapter to mean developing the person as a whole in all aspects of life whether spiritual, social, or mental while in the other chapter curriculum is used to refer to methods of instruction. I concluded that curriculum in the Qur'an uses different methods of instructions to develop the individual as a whole in all aspects of life while granting freedom of choice.

To my husband Hosam and my son Khalid, the people who enrich my life and make me smile every day.

To my mother and the soul of my father for motivating me to pursue my PhD.

To the soul of my daughter, Nora, we miss you more than you can imagine

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction to the Study.....	1
Reasons for This Study.....	1
Research Question.....	7
Organization of Chapters.....	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Introduction .....	9
Shari’a and Islamic Jurisprudence.....	9
The Qur’an .....	13
Interpretations of the Qur’an.....	19
Shahih Al-Bukhari.....	22
Reading the Muslim Mind.....	24
Qur’an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective .....	27
3 CURRICULUM IN THE QUR’AN .....	29
Meaning of “Curriculum” .....	29
Education in the Qur’an .....	31
Theory of Knowledge in the Qur’an .....	33
Seeking Knowledge.....	34
Seeking Knowledge in the Literature .....	38

CHAPTER	PAGE
The Five Educational Requirements in the Qur'an .....	39
Application of Knowledge .....	39
Application of Knowledge in the Literature .....	40
Intention .....	41
Intention in the Literature .....	42
Recognition of the Self .....	43
Recognition of the Self in the Literature.....	45
Critical Thinking.....	46
Critical Thinking in the Literature .....	50
Spirituality.....	50
Spirituality in the Literature.....	51
Conclusion.....	52
4 INSTRUCTION IN THE QUR'AN .....	56
Curriculum as Instruction in the Qur'an.....	56
Main Principles in the Qur'an .....	56
Main Principles in the Literature .....	60
Change in the Qur'an .....	61
Change in the Literature.....	63
Didactic Methods in the Qur'an .....	64
Commands .....	64
Command Language in the Literature .....	67

CHAPTER	PAGE
Repetition.....	67
Repetition in the Literature .....	69
Parables.....	70
Parables in the Literature .....	72
Storytelling.....	73
Storytelling in the Literature .....	77
Demonstration.....	78
Descriptive Language .....	79
Explanatory Language .....	80
Legitimizing Language .....	81
Affiliation Language.....	82
Demonstration in the Literature .....	83
Conclusion.....	85
5 CONCLUSION.....	86
REFERENCES .....	91

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### **Introduction to the Study**

I was raised as a Muslim wearing *hijab*, the head cover, almost all my life. I have been living in the United States (US) for more than twenty years. I worked as a teacher, vice principal, volunteer Sunday school principal, K-12 math curriculum developer, educational consultant, and a lecturer. I worked at private and public schools in addition to Cisco Learning Institute and Commission of International and Transregional Accreditation. I also enjoyed being a student through my graduate studies at Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University.

As a Muslim I read few pages of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, on a daily basis. Although I have been in the field of education almost all my life, I had never taken the time to appreciate the educational curriculum found within the Qur'an. I think this was because I was reading the Qur'an as a daily habit and it was something that I grew up with so I kept it separate from my actual life.

### **Reasons for This Study**

In this dissertation I present the findings of my research on the curriculum within the Qur'an. There are several reasons I chose this topic.

Rereading what Martin Niemoller said in his address to the U.S. Congress in 1968 encouraged me to pursue and look for education curriculum in the Qur'an. Niemoller, whose speech appeared in the Congressional Record, made a powerful statement:



First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out ...  
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out ...  
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out ...  
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me.  
(p. 31636)

After reading the words of Niemoller, I chose to speak out by addressing curriculum in the Qur'an and sharing my findings with others in academia and beyond. As a Muslim woman announcing my faith by wearing the hijab, I felt violated and attacked on different occasions just for being a Muslim especially after the events of September 11th. I felt if I did not explain myself and my faith to others, no one would, especially when misconceptions about Islam and Muslims grew dramatically after September 11, 2001 due to ignorance. I have looked for resources that dealt with education curricula in the Qur'an and found that very few have been written. By changing my approach to my daily reading of the Qur'an and focusing on its educational curriculum aspects, I have found that the Qur'an uses different theoretical approaches that are found in western curriculum studies, and I wanted to share these findings.

Secondly, Islamic education played a major role in building the basis for different fields of education in the Western world since the Middle Ages. Dr. George Holmes (1988), a professor of Medieval History at the University of Oxford, wrote, "Indeed, much of what we consider to be the basis of Western tradition from the period of classical antiquity was preserved not by the West but rather by Islamic scholars in the Middle

Ages” (p. 51). However, western scholars did not acknowledge that the basics of their sciences are adopted from the Islamic civilization and ignored its great effect on western sciences (Holmes, 1988). He added that although there are great works from western scholars as Hitti and Hourani, other historians, such as Bernard Lewis, presented Islamic civilization as dictatorial and corrupt (Holmes, 1988). Shadid and Koningsveld (2002) shared the same opinion as they explained that considering Muslims as the enemy is not a new trend in the west. Politicians and journalists would warn people continuously about Islam and Muslims without providing valid evidence to support their accusations. Shadid and Koningsveld (2002) gave examples confirming their assertion as the “Statements of the Chairman of the Club of Rome, the former Secretary General of the NATO, and of ministers and leaders of right-wing political parties in Western Europe and North America” (p. 174).

French doctor Maurice Bucaille (2003) shares similar sentiments about Western society’s ignorance of Islam, as he wrote in *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science*:

Firstly, apart from the newly-adopted attitudes prevailing among the highest Catholic authorities, Islam has always been subject in the West to a so-called ‘secular slander’. Anyone in the West who has acquired a deep knowledge of Islam knows just to what extent its history, dogma and aims have been distorted. One must also take into account the fact that documents published in European languages on this subject (leaving aside highly specialized studies) do not make the work of a person willing to learn any easier. (p. 118)

In an article titled “Interpreting Islam in American Schools,” Douglass and Ross (2003) agreed with this opinion and confirmed that distortions of Islam are profoundly rooted in the western culture. These misconceptions were addressed by the foreign ministers of nineteen countries who met in Madrid as Hazleton (2010) stated in October

2010. The foreign ministers agreed that the west needed to have better communication with the Muslim world by having better control of the stereotypes and ignorance that is spread in the west. They also added that the west should stop referring to Muslims as the enemy or the terrorist group (Albright Stonebridge Group, 2010).

Much of the current misunderstanding stems from the portrayal of Islam and Muslims by the media. Turow and Gans (2002) explain that the media, more specifically television, reaches great numbers of people and has a major impact on society. They added, “Some media scholars argue that entertainment TV’s impact can be even more powerful than news in subtly shaping the public’s impressions of key societal institutions” (Turow & Gans, 2002, p. 1-2). For example, Muslim women are usually introduced as oppressed and ignorant whose only job is to clean the house, cook, and take care of their children. Another example is the movie *Aladdin*, which represents Muslims as violent people who resolve everything by chopping off hands or heads. The introductory song describes living in the Islamic world as “barbaric.”

Although there has been some progress acknowledging the effects of Islamic scholarship since the Middle Ages, Islam has been often misunderstood by non-Muslims and Muslims alike. There are many Muslims who know only basic history of Islam, which is that Muslims had a great civilization, they invented numbers and arithmetic but then they stopped (Morgan, 2007). I could blame Western media and language barriers for ignorance or misunderstandings from non-Muslims, but I do not know whom to blame for the ignorance of Muslims themselves about their own history and religion.

No one can ignore that there are Western scholars who have acknowledged Islamic scholarship's effects on the West, for example, "Menocal in *The Ornament of the World* in 2002, Rubenstein in *Aristotle's Children* in 2003, and Lowney in *A Vanished World* in 2005" (Morgan, 2007, p. xv). However, it is well-known between scholars that education in the west is built on the foundation of "Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian" (Gunther, 2006, p. 1367). Current U.S. society represents a diverse range of cultural backgrounds which increases the necessity to learn about different educational perspectives, concepts, and practices.

With the increasing Muslim population here in the U.S. and the world in general, learning about the Qur'an's curriculum becomes more important. The Executive Summary of current worldwide population predictions by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life (2011) indicates that "The world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35% in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030" (para. 1). The report adds that the population of Muslims is growing "At about twice the rate of the non-Muslim population over the next two decades... If current trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world's total projected population" (p. 13). This means that one in every four people will be Muslim; therefore learning about Muslims as represented by the Qur'an will be even more important. Additionally, The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (2007) reports that Islam is second to Christianity in regard to the number of followers (para 5).

In addition to misconceptions, ignorance, and the rapidly increasing population of Muslims, there is one more important reason for the choice of this dissertation topic. The Qur'an was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula. Razwy (1996) in his book *A Restatement of the History of Islam and Muslims CE 570 to 661*, Chapter 3, describes the situation in the Arabian Peninsula before the revelation of the Qur'an to be underdeveloped, with no form of government other than tribal leaders. Razwy stated that the most powerful people were those who were the richest and the moneylenders. Slavery was common. Men and women were bought and sold in markets alongside other goods. Arabs used to bury their female infants alive either due to their own poverty or because the female might bring shame to the family. Education at that time was entirely oral, and very few people knew how to read and write. Rodinson (1980), in her book *Mohammed*, further explained:

In practice the free Arabs were bound by no written code of law, and no state existed to enforce its statutes with the backing of a police force. The only protection for a man's life was the certainty established by custom, that it would be dearly bought. Blood for blood and a life for a life. The vendetta, *tha'r* in Arabic, is one of the pillars of Bedouin society. (p. 45)

According to Morgan (2007), life changed dramatically for those who embraced Islam. Women's rights were supported by acquiring knowledge and through participation in daily social activities; equality between races and genders became the common trend, and love and respect for all human beings became the basis of communication. Promoting and seeking knowledge was the driving force behind the development of Islamic civilization which reached as far as China and Europe and ruled Spain for more than 700 years. The civilization has survived for almost 1,250 years (Morgan, 2007). With my dissertation I aim to counter some of the ignorance and misconceptions about the Qur'an as the main

source of inspiration and education for Muslims, exploring methods the Qur'an has used over time to change people's lives and to create educated, civilized communities.

## **Research Question**

The main research question this dissertation will address is: What curriculum exists within the Qur'an?

## **Organization of Chapters**

In this dissertation, I collected, arranged, and summarized relevant information on curriculum in the Qur'an. This dissertation has five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction. Chapter Two constitutes my literature review. Each of chapters three and four starts with the meaning of the word curriculum, and are divided into two main parts. The first part introduces my findings supported by verses from the Qur'an, while the second part presents the literature addressing these findings.

Chapter Three presents the curriculum in reference to the development and redirection of students' thought processes to help them find more meaning and significance in their lives. The focus of this chapter is on giving the learner freedom of choice while developing thinking abilities and at the same time addressing human relations among learners and the world. Mainly, education curriculum in the Qur'an calls for teaching the person as a whole, connecting all aspects of life including the social, intellectual, and spiritual. This chapter concludes by describing the holistic approach of education in the Qur'an.

Chapter Four presents curriculum as the methodology the Qur'an uses to transmit and teach its themes and topics. Here, curriculum in the Qur'an is introduced with an emphasis on the techniques the Qur'an chooses to teach its followers. The chapter starts by introducing ideology in the Qur'an followed by a description of how the teachings and

changes are delivered in steps and stages. It describes how the curriculum was implemented by the prophet Mohamed as the teacher, and practiced by his followers as the students. The chapter concludes with methods of instruction used in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an connects the past to present by using vivid descriptions. It also uses storytelling of events in the past, such as the stories of the prophets Ibrahim, Moses, Adam, Jesus, and others. Such stories invite the reader to look at the past, observe it, and learn from it. Chapter Five is the conclusion.



## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

### Introduction

One of the goals of this dissertation is to find education curriculum within the Qur'an using the limited amount of resources available. Educational curriculum in the Qur'an is introduced with an emphasis on the techniques the Qur'an uses to teach its followers. Mainly, education curriculum in the Qur'an calls for teaching the person as a whole, connecting all aspects of life as the social, intellectual, and spiritual. My primary source is the Qur'an, so the first section of this chapter is an overview of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is also "transliterated as Qur'an, Koran, Al-Coran, Coran, Kuran, and Al-Qur'an, all referring to the same book but with differing pronunciations" (Donner, 1998, p. 173). The form used in this dissertation is "The Qur'an." The second main source used in this dissertation is the most accurate *hadith*, sayings of the prophet Mohammad, called *Al-Bukhari*. I have also used and analyzed two more books: *Reading the Muslim Mind*, and *Believing Women in Islam*. These sources are introduced chronologically according to their publication date.

Before starting with the Qur'an, it is important to have a short introduction to the concept of *Shari'a*<sup>1</sup> as the umbrella that covers the Qur'an, in addition to other sources.

### Shari'a and Islamic Jurisprudence

To have a better understanding of curriculum in the Qur'an, it is important to explain the word Shari'a, or Islamic law. The word Shari'a means "path" in its original Arabic form, and it is derived from the four main sources of Islamic law: the Qur'an, the

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<sup>1</sup> All Arabic words are italicized in this dissertation

*Sunna*, the teachings and practices of the prophet Mohammad, *Ijma'*, the consensus of a group of Muslim scholars, and *Qiyas*, reason by way of analogy. It is agreed by all Muslims that the Qur'an is the first and main source of law followed by the Sunna. This is based on the command by Allah:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah (Qur'an) and his Messenger (The Sunna), if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best and most suitable for final determination. (4:59)<sup>2</sup>

The second source of Shari'a is the *Sunna*, which is the "Tradition of the prophet Mohammad in what he ordered, forbade, did or acknowledged in his capacity as a prophet" (Hathout, 2008, p. 43). The *Sunna* explains rules that are generalized in the Qur'an. For example, Allah ordered people to pray five times a day and assigned the five times for prayer, but did not explain the procedure of the prayer and what to say in each act of the prayer. Therefore, the prophet Mohammad explained to people how to pray. This kind of explanation applies to many other commands in the Qur'an.

In several verses of the Qur'an, Allah ordered Muslims to follow the prophet and submit to his decisions, for example, "And whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it (59:7). Another verse exemplifying this order is "Whoever obeys the Messenger verily obeys Allah" (4:80). These verses encouraged early Muslims to write and accumulate all the narrations of the prophet into a book in order to make the prophet's teachings and sayings available for future generations to follow and adapt. As the Islamic empire expanded to China and North

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<sup>2</sup> These are verse from the Qur'an. The first number is the number of the chapter and the second is the number of the verse

Africa, *hadith* literature developed into different schools of Islamic thought. This is because scholars in each community tried to reconcile local customs with Islam. The Sunna has developed into four main schools of thought. These schools of thought are called *madaheb*. “The distinctions between these madaheb have more impact on the legal system than on individual Muslims, as many do not adhere to one school in their personal lives” (Ali, 2009, p. 140). More than one school might be followed in one region, because not all individuals adhere to all rules within one school. Different motives contributed to the development of these schools, such as the economic and social development of different Islamic communities, the era and approach of the spread of Islam in different regions, the degree to which Shari’a was applied, and how and when it was displaced by European codes during colonial rule (Ahmed & Donnan, 1998, p. 19-20). However, the main reason behind this development was that during the time of the prophet, Muslims would consult with him and follow his teachings and advice. After the prophet’s death and the rule of the four major Muslim caliphs, the Umayyad ruled. Umayyad, also spelled Omayyad, developed and ruled the first Muslim dynasty between 661–750 ce. Umayyad rulers were not religious, and some moved away from the teachings of the Qur’an, which led many scholars to teach their own interpretations and understandings of the Qur’an. The teaching according to personal interpretation led to the development of more than twenty schools of thought. As Siddiqi (2005) pointed out, “There was no central authority that cared enough to unite all religious opinions at that time and this was the beginning of the development of various schools of interpretations” (p. 1). Later the Abbasid Caliphate

succeeded the Umayyad and ruled the second Muslim dynasty between 750–1258. The Abbasid were very supportive of education, including Islamic law.

They encouraged scholars to write books on Islamic laws and encouraged religious discussions and debates. Various scholars had the opportunity to debate their positions with others. Due to more discussions and debates, some scholars changed their opinions, some schools were eliminated and others merged into four major schools. (Siddiqi, 2005, p. 2)

During the third century of *Hijrah*, or migration of the prophet, the four major *Madaheb* were established in several regions and local teachers used the laws of these four schools to teach Shari'a to their students and consequently the four *Madaheb* spread into different Muslim areas (Siddiqi, 2005, p. 5).

The third source of Shari'a is *Ijma'*. *Ijma'* means "The consensus of scholars of Islamic sciences" (Kamali, 2005, p. 156). During the early Islamic era in far-flung Islamic regions, the prophet Mohammad, as well as the four caliphs after him and their governors, used to appoint *qadis*, or judges, to rule according to the laws of the Qur'an and Sunna. However, when a situation occurred outside of the rules included in the Qur'an and Sunna, the judge would consult with judges from other regions and together they would determine the outcome. Typically their ruling was well respected and adopted by Muslims. One example of *Ijma'* mentioned in the Qur'an is: "Hence, decide upon the scheme which you will pursue, and then come forward in one single body..." (20:64).

The fourth and last source is *Qiyas*, which is a judgment based on analogy. "Literally, *qiyas* means comparison, with a view to suggesting equality or similarity between two things, one of which is taken as the criterion for evaluating the other" (Kamali, 2005, p. 180). *Qiyas* is used if there is no ruling found in the Qur'an, *Sunna*, or

*Ijma'* for specific situations. Therefore, *Qiyas* is used for matters that are not covered by the first three resources of Shari'a. *Qiyas* "is designed to ensure conformity with the letter and the spirit of the Qur'an and Sunna" (Kamali, 2005, p. 180). It cannot be used to change or contradict the rules of the Qur'an, Sunna, or *Ijma*. *Qiyas* confirms the flexibility of Shari'a as asserted by Hathout (2008), writing "The Shari'a is not a rigid set of rules to be copied and applied any time or place. It allows for human ingenuity to address changeable situations through progressive legislation" (p. 43).

In this dissertation the Qur'an is used as a main reference along with Sunna, actions and sayings of the prophet. Since the focus of this dissertation is discovering curriculum within the Qur'an, the third and fourth sources of Shari'a, *Ijma'* and *Qiyas*, and the four schools of thought are not included. These additional sources were presented to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the four main sources of Shari'a.

### **The Qur'an**

For Muslims, Allah revealed the Qur'an through the angel Gabriel to the prophet Mohammad. "Allah" is an Arabic word, meaning the one and only god. The Qur'an explains that Allah is the same god of Ibrahim, Jesus, Moses, and all other prophets. Therefore, when the name Allah is used in this dissertation, it refers to the God of all religions and people. Muslims all over the world, regardless of their language, use the word Allah because it cannot be altered or changed into plural, and it represents the supreme divinity.

The Qur'an is revealed to all people and not just for Arabs, as it is clear in: "O ye children of Adam! Whenever there come to you apostles from amongst you, rehearsing

My signs unto you those who are righteous and mend (their lives) on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve” (7:35). Allah addresses all people as the children of Adam, not only people of the Arabian Peninsula where the Qur’an was revealed.

The Qur’an is an Arabic term that means continuous reading. “The revelation thus involves a recitation or something to be recited; and this indeed is the meaning of the original Aramaic word Qur’an, which came to signify the revelation in its totality as well as single parts of it” (Gatje, 1996, p. 5). The Qur’an calls its followers to recite its verses “And recite the Qur’an in slow, measured rhythmic tones” (73.4). This is the reason behind Muslims reading parts of the Qur’an daily, from the time of the prophet to now. Additionally, Muslims are required to recite a few verses of the Qur’an from memory during the five daily prayers, which makes it a universal practice of Muslims to memorize parts of the Qur’an. Memorization of the Qur’an is easier than memorizing most other books because of its rhythmic style. Michael Zwettler (1978), professor of language at Ohio State University, wrote in his book *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry*, “In ancient times when writing was scarcely used, memory and oral transmission was exercised and strengthened to a degree now is almost unknown” (p. 14). Many Muslims at the time of the prophet memorized the Qur’an. “During the lifetime of the prophet, people such as Zaid ibn Thabit, Ubayy ibn Kaab, Muath ibn Jabal, and Abu Zaid, memorized the whole Qur’an” (Al-Bukhari, 1979 Vol. 6, No. 525<sup>3</sup>). Memorization of the Qur’an is a tradition that continues even today. Qur’an is taught at schools in all

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<sup>3</sup> The number here refers to the number of the Hadith in al-Bukhari’s collection

Muslim countries, and many centers specializing in the memorization of the Qur'an are established. All Muslims memorize the Qur'an in its original Arabic language.

When the prophet Mohammad died, there was one written copy of the Qur'an kept with his wife Aisha. The prophet Mohammad asked those of his followers who knew how to write to copy the revealed verses only and not to write anything of his sayings or teachings. The Qur'an was transcribed by "Some of the Prophet's literate companions, the most prominent of them being Zaid ibn Thabit" (Suyuti, 1973, p. 41, 99).

Muslims believe that the current Arabic edition of the Qur'an has Allah's exact words as were revealed to the prophet Mohammad more than fourteen hundred years ago. Allah protects the Qur'an from any changes, as stated in the verse "We who have sent down the dhikr, the Qur'an, and We will guard the Qur'an" (12:2). The Qur'an is divided into 30 *juz'*, or parts, and includes 114 *surahs*, or chapters, arranged by length, from longest to shortest except for the first surah. The first surah is called *al-Fatiha*, the opening. It is an introduction summarizing the main themes of the Qur'an in seven verses (Khaled, 2005). The order of verses and surahs of the Qur'an were decided by Allah and not the prophet or his companions, and it was memorized in the same order.

During the time of the prophet Mohammad, paper had not been introduced to the Arabian Peninsula. Arabs used to write the revealed verses on leather scrolls of animal skin (mainly camel), Egyptian parchment, cloth, and stones (Rodwell, 2004, p. 13). Before the death of the prophet, all surahs were written, collected, and kept in a large leather bag under the supervision of the prophet. There was no need to make copies of the

Qur'an due to the oral culture at that time. After the death of the prophet and with the spread of Islam, non-Arab speakers started to write their own copies of the Qur'an according to their own pronunciation of words and understanding of the verses, which led Othman, the third caliph, to act determinedly and quickly. He formed a committee of four, who were well known for their faith and for their accurate memorization of the Qur'an, and he asked them to collect and verify all written copies of the Qur'an. He burned all copies that included mistakes of any kind. This committee made copies of the Qur'an and sent copies to all major Muslim cities (Bucaille, 2012, p. 4). Two copies of the Qur'an written during that time are still available and displayed in Turkish and Tashkent museums (Schwally, 1919). These copies have exactly the same text as any current Qur'an. Some non-Muslim scholars studied the collection and preservation of the Qur'an and confirmed the authenticity of these copies. The orientalist, John Burton (1979), stated that the Qur'an "...which has come down to us in the form in which it was organized and approved by the prophet.... What we have today in our hands is the *Mushaf* (Qur'an) of Muhammad" (p. 239). Additionally, the religious scholar and Bishop Kenneth Cragg explained that "The transmission of the Qur'an from the time of revelation to today as occurring in an unbroken living sequence of devotion" (Cragg, 1973, p. 26).

According to UNESCO's Memory of the World Program, the *Mushaf* (the Qur'an) of Othman "Is the definitive version" of the Qur'an (Jeffery & Mendelsohn, 1942). "A facsimile of the *Mushaf* in Tashkent is available at the Columbia University Library in the US" (Ibrahim, 1993, p. 113). Additionally, there are



More ancient manuscripts from all periods of Islamic history found in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Chester Beatty Museum in Dublin, Ireland; and the London Museum, have been compared with those in Tashkent, Turkey and Egypt, with results confirming that there have not been any changes in the text from its original time of writing. (Philips, 1997, p. 157)

As for the language of the Qur'an, it is important to draw to the reader's attention that:

Most classical languages have by now disappeared: Sanskrit came to be replaced by the local regional languages of India, and Latin eventually gave way to the European vernaculars, generation by generation, genre by genre, and domain by domain until even the Vatican stopped requiring it to be the language of prayers. But Classical Arabic (*al-lughah al-'arabiyyah al-fushah*, "the Eloquent Arabic Language") as the language of the Qur'an continues to separate the sacred from the profane, writing from speaking, and prescribed religious rituals from personal communication with God. (Haeri, 2007, p. 307)

Classical Arabic used in the Qur'an is a little different from the Modern Standard Arabic. "Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) represents a more modern version of the Arabic found in the Qur'an, which is used in formal contexts and writing" (Hashim, 2011, p. 6). The Qur'an has had a great impact on the Arabic language, making it distinctive and long-lasting. Usually, when a holy book appears in a specific language, it will later be translated into different languages to be used during religious rituals. Despite the translations of the Qur'an into many different languages, these translations of the Qur'an cannot be used to substitute the Arabic language in the five daily prayers. Arabic is the language of worship for all Muslims, whether they are Arabs or not, from the time of revelation until now. This is why there are so few differences between Classical and Modern Standard Arabic: "Other holy books also came to be associated with specific languages, such as the Torah with Hebrew, and, perhaps less intimately, the New

Testament with Greek and Latin” (Hashim, 2011, p. 18). However, people in general tend to read the translations of these holy books and not their original forms, which allowed these languages to disappear over time. As for the Qur’an, millions of copies have been printed and are available in nearly every part of the world without any variant in the Arabic text. All printings of the Arabic Qur’an in the world are reviewed and approved by a special committee in Saudi Arabia. This standard ensures that Muslims all over the world read the same Arabic Qur’an. Arab Muslims in Saudi Arabia read the same Arabic Qur’an as Arabs in the United States, Africa, or Australia. Yet there are many different translations and interpretations for the meanings of the Qur’an in many different languages. However the only accepted language of the Qur’an in the five daily prayers is the Arabic language.

The Qur’an addresses various topics. The main topic is *Tawheed*, the oneness of Allah. Another topic discussed in detail is the next life, heaven and hell. Histories and politics of previous nations, stories of previous prophets, and numerous occurrences during the life of the prophet Mohammad are mentioned in detail. The Qur’an provides arguments to challenge beliefs that do not agree with its teachings and objections that arise about its teachings. A reader of the Qur’an will find laws and policies on everyday life activities as family life, women's rights, cleanliness, commerce, warfare, harmony, law, and democratic systems. These topics are used in this dissertation to explain stages of social change, different forms of language used in the Qur’an, and subjects introduced in the Qur’an.

If the Qur'an is revealed to guide humanity to a peaceful and serene world, why are there so many misconceptions about the Qur'an and the religion of Islam in general? To answer this question we need to look at the interpretations of the Qur'an.

### **Interpretations of the Qur'an**

Many world religions have two categories: moderates, or liberals, versus fundamentalists, or extremists. To have a better understanding of the Qur'an, it is important to address the two major groups' interpretations of the Qur'an: moderate and fundamentalist Muslims. Interpreting the Qur'an depends on the perspective of who is reading it, how he is reading, and the situation in which he is reading it. Therefore, and as with other books, different interpretations of Qur'an reflect the readers' backgrounds and their philosophical and theoretical assumptions.

Ramadan, the professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford University, considered by *Time Magazine* as one of the one hundred most influential people in the world in 2010, stated in his article, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim," "The theme of moderation in religious practice has been a constant in Islamic literature from the very beginning, during the prophet Muhammad's life in the early seventh century" (Ramadan, 2010, p. 3). Allah asks His followers in the Qur'an to be moderate and take the easy path in life as explained in the verse: "God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship" (2: 158). The prophet Mohammad confirms: "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists" (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, No. 38). The prophet Mohammad and his companions were always

flexible when it came to differences of opinion and did not use violence; “Instead they debated and educated the society” (Hassan, 2003, p. 6).

Moderation and extremism go back to the eighth century but with different names. Moderation and extremism started when:

Two interpretations of religious practice sprang up: *ahl al-'azima*, which is the group who applied the Islamic laws without considering the context or the need for easiness into account; and *ahl ar-rukhas*, which is the group who considered the context and the need for flexibility in the social context of daily life. (Ramadan, 2010, p. 2)

To explain a little more, Ramadan (2010) gives an example of the difference between these two groups. In the Qur'an, there is a verse that allows elders, children, pregnant women, travelers, and sick people not to fast during Ramadan if they find difficulty, the month of fasting for Muslims:

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil for a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. And those who find it extremely hard may affect redemption by feeding a poor man. So whoever does good spontaneously, it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know. The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number ... (2:183-185)

In regard to these verses, *ahl al-'azima* would say the sick, elders, travelers, and pregnant women should fast because the more challenging something is, the more glory they receive from Allah. *Ahl al-'azima* shape their lives around choosing the more difficult path because they think it brings them closer to Allah. However, *ahl ar-rukhas* would pose that if it is permissible, then why go through pain? Their argument is if the creator,

Allah, is giving this group of people the permission to break their fast, why should they suffer? *Ahl ar-rukhas* choose the easier path in life. This choice is not based on individual preference but rather on choices made by scholars or religious leaders of each area who make decisions for each region. “Muslims in general consider *ahl ar-rukhas* the moderate group” (Ramadan, 2010, p. 5).

In other words, the moderate group would interpret the Qur’an differently than the extremist or radical group. So, what is the right way to interpret the Qur’an? The Qur’an provides people with the appropriate way to interpret the text. The Qur’an is designed for people to read it as a whole book and not just parts of it. Barlas (2007) explains, “This is clear from the fact that it praises those who say ‘we believe in the book; the whole of it is from our Lord’ (3:7)” (para 4). To confirm this point, the Qur’an condemns those who choose parts of it “While ye conceal much of its contents” (6:91). The Qur’an emphasizes considering all factors related to each verse due to its textual unity. To be able to understand the Qur’an, people are required to study the reasons for the revelation of its verses, while studying all other verses dealing with the same topic. In other words, people are required to read it “Holistically and intratextually” to reach for its true meanings (Barlas, 2007, para 8).

To conclude, different interpretations of the Qur’an should not be confused with the Qur’an itself. The Qur’an explained that there are some people “Who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: ‘This is from God’ ” (2:79). This means that the Qur’an differentiates between its text and people’s interpretations. Additionally, the Qur’an warns people that there would be a group who will falsify its meanings to match

their needs or serve their agendas. The verse to support this is: “And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book but (see therein their own) desires and they do nothing but conjecture” (2:78). The proper way to understand the Qur’an and its rules is by reading it holistically.

The Qur’an is the main source of data collection in this dissertation. Each aspect of educational curriculum in the Qur’an is explained and supported by verses from the Qur’an using moderate interpretations.

### **Sahih Al-Bukhari**

The second main source used in this dissertation is *Sahih Al-Bukhari*. *Sahih Al-Bukhari* is a collection of *ahadeeth*, or sayings, of the prophet Mohammad for all aspects of life. The *ahadeeth* were collected to guide Muslims in following the prophet’s life. The *ahadeeth* deal with religious, legal, social, and economic situations. Some *ahadeeth* topics include the oneness of Allah, prayers, fasting, and all other pillars of Islam, knowledge, trade and business, mortgages, creations of Allah, marriage, divorce, law, medicine, and even dreams. There are six main sources for ahadeeth: Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Al-Turmithi, Al-Nissai, Ibn Majah and Abu Dawood. Sahih al-Bukhari is considered by Muslim scholars to be the most accurate book and this is why I chose it.

The ahadeeth in *Sahih Al-Bukhari* were collected and written by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari (194-256 A.H.). The prophetic ahadeeth were transmitted from one generation to the other orally without documentation. Al-Bukhari was among the first to work hard collecting ahadeeth. He spent 16 years travelling from one region to another, collecting and writing the ahadeeth of the prophet. He was able to

collect 2,602 hadith (Khan, 2009, p. 1). He finished his *Sahih Al-Bukhari* in 846 CE/ 232 A.H. While al-Bukhari was collecting the ahadeeth, he checked each hadith from three different angles. First he checked each hadith for consistency with the verses of the Qur'an. Secondly, he checked the narrators of each and every hadith for his morals and truthfulness. Finally, al-Bukhari meticulously established the chain of reporters. Because of these standards, his collection of hadith is considered the most rigorous and accurate by all hadith scholars.

The majority of the Muslim world recognizes al-Bukhari's work and accepts its legitimacy. It is considered the most authentic book of the ahadeeth of the prophet. One of the admired scholars who recognize al-Bukhari's book is Ahmed ibn Hanbal. He is commonly known as *Sheikh* al-Islam, leader of Islam, and he is the founder of the Hanbali School, one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Another scholar who approved of al-Bukhari's book is Ali ibn al-Madini, who specialized in the study of hadith and its biographical evaluation in regard to its chain of narration. *Sahih Al-Bukhari* is still used all over the Islamic world and until now is the most accurate reference to the study of the hadith.

*Sahih Al-Bukhari* has nine volumes, and each volume is divided into several books. These books are meant only to divide the ahadeeth according to topics, while the ahadeeth are numbered consecutively in each volume. *Sahih Al-Bukhari* has been translated into many languages, with all nine volumes translated into English by the scholar Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

As explained earlier, if verses from the Qur'an are not available to explain any concept of education, then the sayings or actions of the prophet from *Sahih Al-Bukhari* are used to support the claimed aspect of education.

### **Reading the Muslim Mind**

Another main reference in this dissertation is Dr. Hassan Hathout's (2008) book *Reading the Muslim Mind*. Dr. Hathout received many awards from interfaith and humanitarian communities. Some of his awards include the Jewish Christian Muslim Olive Branch and the Initiatives of Change Life Changer award as a recognition and appreciation for his long and hard work to creating peace and harmony between different faiths,. Hathout is a multi-cultural physician, leader of a community center in Southern California, ethicist, poet, and scientist. He is a well-known monotheism scholar who wrote several books about Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. *Reading the Muslim Mind* was first printed in 1994 and has been reprinted eight times so far. Hathout explained that this book developed from his personal observation of biculturalism. He was born in Egypt, moved to Britain where he taught at the University of Edinburg, and lived in the United States until the end of his life in 2009. Experiencing different cultures led him to the realization that the West has so many inaccurate ideas about Islam that have no relation to the Qur'an or the religion of Islam in general.

The Islamic scholar and former minister of Petrol and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, wrote the foreword of the book *Reading the Muslim Mind*, in which he asserts that "Tolerance and peace are the twin principles that underlie the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in general and people of the book in



particular” (Hathout, 2008, p. xiii). Incidents recorded in history that disagree with this ideology have nothing to do with the Qur’an or Shari’a. “They are attributable to the Muslim concerned and not to Islam” (p. xiii). The foreword is followed by a preface and four chapters.

Chapter One of *Reading the Muslim Mind*, entitled “God,” is a short chapter that discusses some qualities of Allah, confirming his divine existence. In his simple, persuasive style, Hathout identifies the way that guides Muslims to know their creator to help them believe and surrender to Allah. In Chapter Two, entitled “So What? The Creed of Islam,” Hathout addresses humans’ logic and critical thinking as providing evidence to the existence of Allah. He discusses the blessings that Allah bestowed on humans as acknowledged in the three major religions and the differences between humans and beasts. In Chapter Three, “Islam and the Others,” Hathout discusses the relation between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. “The non-Muslim reader will be astonished at the bonds that link Islam” with other religions (p. xxii). Hathout also discusses how Islamic civilization provided the foundation upon which to build Western civilization in different disciplines. He goes on to explain that any disagreement or deviations between Muslims and Christians or Jews is due to political history and not to religion itself. He concludes this chapter by calling for an end to conflict and to join efforts to remove the bitter sentiments “that have built up over the ages” (p. xxiv).

Chapter Four is titled “The Anatomy of Islam.” It is the longest and most important chapter for this dissertation. In this chapter, Hathout briefly analyzes Shari’a and then discusses spirituality in Islam, including moral and worship aspects.

Additionally, this chapter discusses democracy and human rights such as freedom of speech, movement, worship, and equality between all. However, Hathout wrote, “Unfortunately, much has changed since the dawn of Islam and many of the pristine features of the Islamic constitutional system have been allowed to erode away” (p. xxvii). Later in the chapter, Hathout introduces the five pillars of Islam as the important bases that a Muslim usually learns during childhood or in elementary school years. The goal of introducing these pillars is to give the non-Muslim reader insight into how Muslims work on building their relationship with Allah through worship, following His commands, avoiding His prohibitions in their everyday life, and actions that influence their spirituality. The author supports his explanations with verses from the Qur’an and ahadeeth of the prophet. In the last chapter, “Live Issues,” Hathout addresses political and social issues “About which there is much controversy throughout the world” (p. xxviii). He discusses *jihad* (struggle), family and the sexual revolution, organ donation, the new world order, and the definition of death. He also provides some solutions that reflect his understanding of Shari’a and its principles.

In *Reading the Muslim Mind*, Hathout exposes the reader to Islam while providing a connection between the mind, practice, spirit, and rationale behind Muslims’ behaviors and their relationship with the ultimate power, Allah. Hathout summarizes the concepts of religion very simply and explains important topics in modern times from an Islamic perspective. In short, Hathout calls for two things: the first is a basic human right, which is “To be known for what one is and the second is to summarize the concept of religion in one word, that is, ‘love’” (p. xxx).

*Reading the Muslim Mind* is used mainly in this dissertation to explain the spiritual side of education in the Qur'an. The book includes valuable information about teaching humans as a whole person, including spirituality and critical thinking. It uses the blessings that Allah bestowed on humans as means to reach spirituality, which is one of the goals of education curriculum in the Qur'an. The book is also used to help introduce the educational instructions included in curriculum in the Qur'an, especially by using the affiliation form of language found within the Qur'an.

### **Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective**

One final reference used in this dissertation is Amina Wadud's (1999) book *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. Amina Wadud is an Islamic Studies professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is a human rights activist and Islamic feminist who has written many books defending women's rights and equality in Islam.

Wadud's book has two principal themes. The first is the Qur'an should be read in the context of the era with an understanding of the reasons behind its revelation in order to understand its rules. The second theme is the need for constant interpretation of the Qur'an to identify its ideology. *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* has an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction can be summarized by its title, which is: "How Perceptions of Women Influence Interpretation of the Qur'an" (p. 1). Wadud moves to introducing the book's methodology (p. 3), language of prior text (p. 5), perspectives on women (p. 7), key terms and concepts of the Qur'an (p. 10), and chapter outlines (p. 12).

Wadud identifies the necessity of reading the Qur'an methodically, holistically, and chronologically in order to understand "The social reform for women" (p. 78), as the Qur'anic verses were revealed as a response "To particular circumstances in Arabia at the time of the revelation" (p. 78). Wadud's book is used primarily as a reference for explaining how one should read and interpret the Qur'an, as I have outlined in this chapter of the dissertation.

## Chapter Three - Curriculum in the Qur'an

### Meaning of "Curriculum"

In 1918, John Franklin Bobbitt, a university professor who specialized in curriculum, was the first to publish a textbook entitled *The Curriculum*. Bobbitt defined curriculum as the experiences, planned and unplanned, that students have in school to become successful in society (Bobbitt, as cited in Kliebard, 2004). The planned experiences are from the material taught in class, mathematics and science for example, and the unplanned experiences include listening to the teacher or raising hands before speaking in class. School leaders in the United States adopted these ideas because they emphasized the importance of social proficiency (Bobbitt, as cited in Kliebard, 2004).

Bobbitt affirmed that although the role of administration in education is important, administrators cannot control students' thinking and actions:

It is evident also that the lives of the young people cannot be planned in administrative offices and the plans sent out to teachers who are merely to regiment the lives of the pupils according to the specifications. The education of free persons is their living of their own lives. (p. 228)

Later, Bobbitt revised his ideas:

In his final book *Curriculum of Modern Education*, Bobbitt (1941) developed four consistent ideas: an emphasis on the importance of general education; the inability to predetermine future lives and roles of students; the necessity for schools to develop individuals' intellect rather than to train them for work and a respect for many of the classic authors of "great books" from the Western tradition. (Bobbitt as cited in Zacharias, 2004, p. 2)

Later, another idea developed introducing curriculum as "... the process by which these contents are transmitted or 'delivered' to students by the most effective methods that can be devised" (Blenkin, Edwards & Kelly, 1992, p. 23). In their formulation, Blenkin et al.

changed the meaning of curriculum to mean the instructions or methods that teachers use to teach the subject matter.

Moreover, the word “curriculum” has been used to refer to the subject material taught at schools. It was the body of knowledge to be transmitted to students. Early Western foundations of educational scholars focused on great ideas taught in Classical and Renaissance periods: “The trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy)” (Stewart, 2013, para 9). In the early twentieth century, the word “curriculum” was expanded to include more practical and vocational subjects including the arts, physical education, and others (Holsinger & Cowell, 2000). At that stage, content was accompanied by skills training. Western traditionalists believed that having knowledge and skills would make an educated successful person.

Recent views of curriculum recommend embracing common core state standards that promotes providing a clear idea of the subject matter taught, activities, instructions, and all resources that can be employed by a teacher to achieve the goals of education, which has led some to think that each teacher would instruct according to his or her own beliefs and abilities. As a response, subject matter specialists developed packaged curricula for teachers to use and follow as a script. This may explain the use of teachers’ manuals in our schools.

These multiple views mean that the word curriculum has various definitions:

Some of these definitions can be: a set of subjects; content; a program of study; a set of materials; a sequence of courses; performance objectives; everything that goes on within the school including extra-class activities, guidance, and interpersonal relationships; everything that is planned by

school personnel; a series of experiences undergone by learners in a school or that which an individual learner experiences as a result of schooling. (Oliva, 1997, p 4)

Some scholars have indicated that the debate about curriculum cannot be finalized because of the continuous changes in the world, which have resulted in the varying schools of thought. In 2009 Marsh wrote "...over 120 definitions of the term appear in the professional literature devoted to curriculum" (p. 2).

### **Education in the Qur'an**

The word "curriculum" in this chapter refers mainly to developing and directing the thinking abilities of students in order for them to live fruitful lives and improve their world (Zacharias, 2004, p. 2).

As an introduction to education curriculum in the Qur'an, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the word "education" in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. Al-Attas (1979), a prominent Muslim philosopher, writes that the Arabic word for education is derived from three different words: *tarbiya*, bring up; *ta'dib*, discipline; and *ta'lum*, educate. *Tarbiya* refers to leading people to maturity; *ta'dib* means accepting and performing communal and ethical conduct; and *ta'lum* is the act of receiving knowledge. Al-Attas adds, "What each of these terms conveys concerning man and his society and environment in relation to God is related to others and together they represent the scope of education in Islam, both formal and informal" (p. 157). According to this explanation, the word curriculum in the Qur'an includes guiding individuals to maturity while expanding their understanding of moral and social rules in addition to teaching new

content. The word education in the Qur'an deals with the individual and his relation with God, society, and the world.

There are two different types of knowledge mentioned in the Qur'an: the known knowledge, called *ilm* in Arabic, and hidden knowledge, *Al-Ghayb*. *Ilm* refers to the type of knowledge that humans have in terms of their ability to feel with their senses and comprehend with their minds, such as math, literature, arts, sciences, and other subjects taught at school. *Ilm* or the known knowledge is the knowledge that humans are required to seek throughout their lifetimes. The words "knowledge" and "education" as used in this dissertation refer to all types of known knowledge, including religious, literary, historical, and scientific knowledge.

The second type of knowledge, *Al-Ghayb*, is the unknown. *Al-Ghayb* is one of the basic foundations of the belief system in the Qur'an. Examples of *Al-Ghayb* include the origin of Allah, time and place of death, and the time for the Day of Judgment. Muslims are obliged to believe in *Al-Ghayb* and are required not to pursue it as something that can be proven. The word *Al-Ghayb* is mentioned in the Qur'an numerous times. One of the verses states that the first aspect of believers is that they "Believe in *Al-Ghayb*, the hidden" (2:2). In several verses in the Qur'an, Allah describes Himself as the only one who knows *Al-Ghayb*: "Allah, the one who knows the unseen/unknown and the visible/knowable" (39:46) and "With Him are the keys of the unseen (*Al-Ghayb*). No one has knowledge of it other than Him..." (6:59). Even the Prophet Mohammed does not know *Al-Ghayb*: "Say (O Muhammad!): "I do not say to you that I have the treasures of Allah nor that I know the unseen (*Al-Ghayb*)... I only follow what is revealed to me."



(6:50). However, Allah reveals certain things from the unseen to His messengers: “He is the One who knows the unseen (*Al-Ghayb*), and He reveals His unseen (*Al-Ghayb*) to no one, except to the messenger ...” (72:26-27). For example, Allah revealed to His prophets descriptions of heaven and hell, scenes of the Day of Judgment, and information about some future events. Allah revealed this type of knowledge to support His messengers in order for them to teach, warn, and help people be prepared for those events.

### **Theory of Knowledge in the Qur’an**

In reading the Qur’an and coding aspects of curriculum, I found that there is no one clear definition of the theory of knowledge, yet great emphasis is placed on seeking knowledge. In general, theories of knowledge offer guiding principles for developing an educational system. They aid curriculum designers in building their own methodologies to reach their designed goals or objectives (Hansen, Fliesser, Froelich, & McClain, 1992). Each educational system incorporates its own particular theory of knowledge that fits its needs and desires. What’s more, educational philosophies evolve over time. Muslims believe the Qur’an carries a universal message and is not limited to time or place. Therefore, I concluded that the Qur’an does not define a theory of knowledge to be used and applied because societies change constantly.

Instead of defining a theory of knowledge, curriculum in the Qur’an uses four epistemologies. First, the lack of a clear definition of curriculum in the Qur’an has allowed Islamic scholars to provide various definitions and explanations of epistemology based on the time and place in which they live and using the same bases as those used in the Qur’an. Secondly, the Qur’an encourages people to pursue knowledge. Thirdly, the

Qur'an gives a detailed description of knowledgeable people and their behaviors, morals, and actions, which is more beneficial than a philosophical definition of morals. Fourthly, and since people may read the same text and come away with different interpretations and understandings, curriculum in the Qur'an uses demonstration to send a clear message of its teachings. Demonstrating the characteristics of educators and educated people encourages learners to build on these qualities. These four epistemologies will be addressed throughout this chapter.

As for theory of knowledge in the literature, although curriculum in the Qur'an does not provide a definition for theory of knowledge, Muslim scholars have provided their own views in regard to curriculum in the Qur'an that supports my findings. Dr. Hasan Langgulung (2011), professor of science and technology at Malaysia University, pointed out the bases for curriculum in the Qur'an:

The bases of Islamic Philosophy of education are ... the belief that human has potency within the development of morality and spirituality, the belief that each individual is responsible for his action ...and also the belief of universal similarity among the people. (p. 3)

The goal of this chapter is to elucidate what the Qur'an says first with regard to promoting education and seeking knowledge. Following that is a discussion of the five requirements within the curriculum of the Qur'an — the application of knowledge, intention, recognition of the self, critical thinking, and spirituality — in the context of Islamic beliefs. This section uses Qur'anic verses to illustrate these concepts.

### **Seeking Knowledge**

Reading through the Qur'an, I found that one of the epistemologies used in Qur'an's curriculum is promoting education and seeking knowledge. The importance of

learning and seeking knowledge is clarified in several ways. First, the revelation of the first five verses of the Qur'an to the prophet Mohammed in the surah called *Al-Alaq*, which reads: "Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot. Read, for your Lord is most generous, who teaches by means of the pen, teaches man what he does not know" (96:1-5)<sup>4</sup>. The first verse, or to be more specific, the first word, in communication between Allah and the prophet Mohammed was "read;" it was not pray or fast. The word "read" clarifies the importance of knowledge for humans and emphasizes the value of education in the Qur'an.

Another way the Qur'an demonstrates the significance of education and knowledge is through the story of the creation of the prophet Adam. When Allah created Adam, the first thing He did was teach Adam the science of naming things, *ilm al-asma*: "And He taught Adam all the names (of everything) ..." (2:31). Allah taught Adam one rule at that time, the first being not to eat from a certain tree<sup>5</sup>, and afterward He gave Adam the chance to live his own life in his own way in heaven. By teaching Adam the names of everything immediately after creating him, Allah places the ultimate importance on knowledge and education. It is like education comes after life.

The third method that curriculum in the Qur'an uses is explained in this verse: "Thy Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth" (2:30), with a vicegerent of Allah on earth being one who has the ability to rule the world. Adam was created to be

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<sup>4</sup> Capitalization is found in verses in the Qur'an for all words that refer to Allah, the creator.

<sup>5</sup> There is no reference in the Qur'an or any other scholarly books about the kind of tree that Adam was forbidden to eat from. However, there are verses describing the conversation between Adam and Satan when he was trying to convince Adam to eat from the tree: "O Adam! Shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?" (20:120). All other verses refer to the same type of "eternity tree."

the vicegerent of Allah on earth, and the Qur'an requires all sons of Adam to seek knowledge to develop their skills in all aspects of life in order to become competent vicegerents. The concept is similar to a student who works hard to meet the expectations of his favorite teacher or a child who tries to fulfill his parents' expectations.

Fourth, curriculum in the Qur'an asks people directly to pursue knowledge. One example of a verse that encourages people to seek knowledge reads, "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees" (58:11). This verse reflects the fact that knowledgeable people have higher status in the eyes of Allah. One more example is:

Their Prophet said to them: "(Allah) hath appointed Talut as king over you." They said: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted, with wealth in abundance?" He said: "(Allah) hath chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess ..."  
(2:247)

This verse explains that Talut was chosen as king is because he had more knowledge.

Along with the direct order, the Qur'an encourages people to pursue education by introducing Allah's signs in the universe, followed by asking people to ponder these signs and to attempt to figure out how and why they happen. These verses are always concluded by questioning the reader or listener: "... do they (people) not listen/ponder/see/reflect ..." on these signs and "Is He who creates comparable to any (being) that cannot create? Will you not, then, bethink yourselves?" (16:17). A further example states:

And it is He who has spread the earth wide and placed on it firm mountains and running waters, and created thereon two sexes of every

(kind of) plant; (and it is He who) causes the night to cover the day.  
Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who think! (13:3)

Another verse reads, “In this, behold, there are messages indeed for those who are endowed with reason!” (20:128). These verses invite people to question the many signs in God’s creation everywhere and strive to find the answers to them. This is an indirect way of asking people to seek knowledge in order to understand the creation of the universe.

In addition to verses of the Qur’an, the prophet Mohammed asked Muslims to attain knowledge, and he even encouraged them to travel for the purpose of pursuing knowledge from all parts of the world. Examples of the Ahadeeth,<sup>6</sup> or sayings of the prophet, that demonstrate the importance of knowledge include “Allah opens the path of Paradise to one who takes a step on the path of acquisition of knowledge” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, No. 201); “The best monuments and legacies which a man leaves behind himself are a dutiful son, useful buildings, knowledge which are benefited by the people after him” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 2, No. 11); and “One who wishes to see those who are safe from the fire of hell should look at the seekers of knowledge” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, No. 58). Additionally, when the prophet commended the worshippers and learners in his mosque, he praised the group who met to learn more and said, “I have been sent as a teacher” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, No. 11), affirming the prophet’s encouragement of learning and seeking knowledge over staying at the mosque and praying. Finally, the prophet Mohammed said, “Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim, man and woman” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, No. 201).

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<sup>6</sup>All Ahadeeth used in this dissertation are used from one source, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, as Muslims believe it is the most accurate source of the sayings of the prophet Mohammed.

## Seeking Knowledge in the Literature

In terms of the significance of knowledge and the importance of seeking knowledge, Professor Asma Afsaruddin (2005), senior editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Women*, points out that “The Qur’an depicts knowledge as a great bounty from God granted to His prophets and their followers through time” (p. 1). She also included verses 2:151-152, 4:113, 12:22, 28:14, etc., as among those confirming that Allah bestows knowledge on His prophets and their followers (p. 1). These verses state:

A similar (favor have ye already received) in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you in Scripture and Wisdom, and in new knowledge. Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and reject not Faith (2: 151-152);

But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But (in fact) they will only lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou Knewest not (before): And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee (4:113);

“When Joseph attained His full manhood, We gave him power and knowledge: thus do We reward those who do right” (12:22); and “When he reached full age, and was firmly established (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge: for thus do We reward those who do good” (28:14). These verses describe how Allah bestows knowledge to people so they may differentiate between good and evil and therefore lead their people.

## **The Five Educational Requirements in the Qur'an**

### **Application of Knowledge**

There are certain expectations and assertions that curriculum in the Qur'an anticipates and encourages its followers to adopt. The first expectation is the application of knowledge. The expected application of knowledge is internal (within the human self) first and external (communicating with others) second. People are not required to study merely for the sake of learning; they are required to apply knowledge towards the improvement of themselves and society, to "Follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord" (7:3). For example, people learn morals to improve their own daily behaviors, but they study politics to improve society and to achieve justice and peace. Many verses require the knowledge a person gains to be reflected in his actions. For example:

And say (unto them, O Prophet): 'Act! And God will behold your deeds, and (so will) His Apostle, and the believers: and (in the end) you will be brought before Him who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind -and then He will make you understand what you have been doing.' (9:105)

The prophet Mohammed is the role model for all Muslims, and he was the first to apply all knowledge that he gained to all his daily life activities. Aisha, the prophet's wife, described the prophet as a Qur'an walking on earth. Examples of applying knowledge include performing the five daily prayers, fasting the month of Ramadan regardless of the whether paying annual alms representing 2.5 % of a Muslim's savings to the needy, and the pilgrimage to Mekka. Following certain dietary restrictions, such as

refraining from drinking alcohol or eating pork, also can be considered an application of knowledge. Additionally, the prophet said:

The feet of the son of Adam will not move away from his Lord on the Day of Resurrection till he is asked about five things about his life, how he spent it; about his youth, how he passed it; about his wealth, how he earned it; and on what he poured it; and what he did with that which he learnt. (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 3, No. 2424)

The Qur'an describes those who have knowledge and do not apply it in:

The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) law, but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey which carries a load of books (but understands them not). Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the sign of God: And God guides not people who do wrong. (62:5)

Therefore, having knowledge and not applying it makes a person like an animal, as a donkey that does not know or comprehend the value of what he has learned and is merely traveling with a heavy weight on his back.

**Application of knowledge in the literature.** As stated in the first part of this chapter, the first requirement in the Qur'an's curriculum is the application of knowledge, which is meant to be combined with seeking knowledge itself. The application of knowledge is required in Western education as well. Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and many other educational theorists and scholars called for the application of knowledge. For example, Freire (1973) insisted that "Knowledge necessitates the curious presence of subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality" (p. 101). Mark Halstead (2004), at the University of Plymouth, in the United Kingdom, confirmed the importance of application of knowledge when he wrote, "If a man reads a hundred thousand scientific subjects but does not act upon them, his knowledge is of no



use to him, for its benefit lies only in being used” (p. 70). This quote suggests that for people to have knowledge and not acting upon it is like adding one more book to a library which serves no purpose if the knowledge contained in the book is not utilized. Azram (2011), doctor of science at the University of Malaysia, asserted the importance of applying knowledge when he wrote, “The theory of knowledge in the Islamic perspective is not just a theory of epistemology; it combines knowledge, insight, and social action as its ingredients” (p. 186). This view coincides with my readings of the Qur’an as related to the necessity of applying knowledge.

### **Intention**

Another requirement of curriculum in the Qur’an is intention. The Qur’an asks its followers to seek knowledge with an intention to satisfy the Creator and get closer to Him. Intention in the Qur’an is a basic foundation of any action: “Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is oft-forgiving most forbearing” (2:225). Some very simple acts are of great value in Allah’s view because of the pure intentions of the applicant. Other great acts lose their value because their intentions are not directed toward satisfying Allah: “As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in our ways” (2:276). Another example is “But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful” (33:5). Every person has to answer to Allah for what he does or fails to do according to his intentions. Prophet Mohammed confirms the necessity of intention before action by saying, “All actions are judged by motives, and each person will be rewarded according to their intention. Thus,

he whose migration was to God and His Messenger, his migration is to God and His Messenger; but he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 42).

This hadith explains that any action must be intended to satisfy Allah and get closer to Him, as long as it does not contradict the commandments or prohibitions of the Qur’an. Allah asks people to seek knowledge with the intention of learning as a response to His orders.

Another demonstration of intention is the *shahada*, or testimony of faith, which is the first step a person must take to become a Muslim. The next step and the sole purpose of a believer in Allah is to make the intention that the main goal of being a Muslim is to obey Allah and please Him. The Qur’an states that humans must direct their lives and their intentions towards pleasing Allah: “Say: ‘My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds” (6:162).

Having intentions for our actions is similar to Western legal codes in which individual responsibility is predicated on a person’s intent and motive. The difference is in curriculum in the Qur’an the intention should be one which is satisfying Allah.

**Intention in the literature.** The second requirement in curriculum in the Qur’an is that there should be a clear intention behind seeking knowledge, that of getting closer to and satisfying Allah. Muslim scholars advise people to take a moment for themselves before approaching any action and to determine the intentions of their actions. Further,

humans must avoid any action that is not directed toward pleasing Allah. Muslim scholar Jamal Badawi (2010) confirmed the importance of intention, writing:

Behind any action or form of behavior there are certain motives. What Islam regards as essential is that the motives behind what we say or do should always be directed towards God. They should always be directed towards the purpose of perusing the pleasure, approval and satisfaction of God. (para. 3)

### **Recognition of the Self**

Curriculum in the Qur'an calls for respect and an appreciation for individuals, as it says, "We have honored the sons of Adam...." (17:70). Another verse addresses the recognition of Adam is when Allah ordered the angels to bow to him: "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him" (15:29). Allah's command to the angels reflects Adam's prestigious status in His eyes. Other verses confirm Adam's status by stating that the whole universe was created for Adam and his children to enjoy and utilize: "It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; ..." (2:29). Another verse says, "It is We who have given you the authority on the earth and provided you (humanity) therein the means for the fulfillment of your life" (7:10).

Curriculum in the Qur'an recognizes that learners have different abilities, interests, prior experiences, and learning potential, and the Qur'an encourages learners to learn about themselves first before learning about the world. "Allah does not charge a soul except (with that within) its capacity. It will have (the consequence of) what (good) it has gained, and it will bear (the consequence of) what (evil) it has earned" (2:286). Another verse states, "Everyone will be entitled to get according to his efforts" (53:39).

Status is earned according to a person's actions and deeds, as in "And for all there are ranks according to what they do" (46:19), but at the same time the Qur'an clarifies the criterion for gaining higher status: "The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the best in conduct" (49:13).

Curriculum in the Qur'an encourages learners to try to understand who they are and how their understanding of what they learn impacts their lives. Many verses in the Qur'an ask the reader or listener a question as a way to open a dialogue, with the ultimate goal of achieving recognition of the self. Examples include "...can the blind be held equal to the seeing? Will ye then consider not?" (6:50) and "These two kinds (of men) may be compared to the blind and deaf, and those who can see and hear well. Are they equal when compared? Will ye not then take heed?" (11:24). The use of questioning enables humans to discover who they are and to plan their lives in relation to the world they live in. Humans must develop and distinguish themselves through their own efforts and hard work: "Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it!" (91:10-11). Similar to Allah's previously mentioned view of humans who do not apply their knowledge as resembling donkeys that are oblivious to the value of what they have learned, the Qur'an describes people who merely eat, sleep, marry, have children, and then die with no purpose or effort toward self-improvement as living like animals: "... They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided" (7:179).

While individuals cannot control their physical growth, developing the inner self, mind, and personality should be their ultimate goal. Curriculum in the Qur'an connects

self-development with each individual's own actions: "And whatever (wrong) any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden..." (6:164).

Recognition of the varying nature of human beings is confirmed through the use of different methods in the Qur'an while calling people to believe in Allah. People learn in different ways; some learn by seeing: "Whoever, therefore, chooses to see, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to remain blind, does so to his own hurt" (6:104). Others learn by reminding them only as indicated in: "Yet go on reminding (all who would listen): for, verily, such a reminder will profit the believers" (51:55). Others learn by hearing: "There is indeed a reminder for everyone whose heart is wide-awake -that is, (every-one who) lends ear with a conscious mind" (50:37). Additionally, Allah ordered the prophet to use different methods of teaching as in: "(Prophet), call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is rightly guided" (16:126). This verse suggests the use of wisdom, argumentation, and good manners to persuade people. This part will be explained in more detail in the Curriculum as Instruction chapter.

**Recognition of the self in the literature.** The third requirement in curriculum in the Qur'an is recognition of the self. Butterworth (2001) quoted Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroës, the influential Islamic philosopher, when he explained that recognizing human differences is obvious in the Qur'an through the method Allah uses in

communicating with people, as “People’s natures vary in excellence with respect to assent” (p. 8). Butterworth (2001) added:

That is because people's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements. (p. 6)

This asserts that there are three types of learners. Some people learn best by demonstration, some learn best by dialectical statements, and others learn best by rhetorical statements. This is reflected in Allah asking the prophet to use different types of teaching, as will be explained in detail in the next chapter, Curriculum as Instruction.

### **Critical Thinking**

Curriculum in the Qur’an encourages the development of critical learners who are able to learn in any context. In this section, critical thinking refers to the Paul and Elder (2001) definition: “That mode of thinking – about any subject, content, or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them” (p. 50). The Qur’an considers thinking and using one’s reason as a commitment that people must make. Allah says, “How little you reflect” (7:3), “God sets those who do not use their reason in a mire of uncleanness” (10:100), “We set out in detail the signs for people who will reason and understand” (30:28) and:

And in the alteration of night and day, and in the provision (rain) God sends down from the sky and reviving thereby the earth after its death, and His turning about of the winds there are clear signs for a people who are able to reason. (45:5)

Curriculum in the Qur'an develops critical thinking through several techniques. The first is by directing students to observe details within larger contexts in order to recognize the different creations in the world and how those creations are related to their own lives. The Qur'an presents signs for critical thinkers as a way to encourage them to use their mental abilities to discover the world around them. For example:

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind ... (here) indeed are signs for people who are wise.  
(2:164)

This verse is a clear invitation to man to think about Allah's creation of the universe, including the skies, earth, night, day, the oceans and why ships are floating on them. The Qur'an asks people to observe, reflect, and question why Allah created the world: "These are signs in detail for those who reflect" (10:24); "Do they not reflect in their own minds?" (30:8). Many verses ask humans to think and reflect, among them 3:19, 2:219, 13:3 and 30:21.

Curriculum in the Qur'an also encourages critical thinking through the use of storytelling. It uses stories of past generations to demonstrate the importance of critical thinking and its positive results. One example is story of how the prophet Ibrahim thought critically when he started to look around himself and wonder about the sun and moon and whether they could be God, Creator of the universe:

So when the night covered him (with darkness), he saw a star. He said, "This is my Lord." But when it set, he said, "I like not those that disappear." And when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." But when it set, he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray." And when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord; this is greater." But when it set, he said, "O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I

have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.” (6:76-79)

The prophet Ibrahim’s observation of the sun and the moon created a doubt in his heart and made him conclude that whatever sets and rises are created and cannot be the Creator. This passage encourages people to observe and use their intellect rather than simply follow cultural traditions and thoughts. The prominent Islamic scholar Al-Biruni explained that the main motive behind his studies and research is this verse: “...And reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: our Lord! You have not created this in vain...” (3:191).

Curriculum in the Qur’an also uses argumentation to foment learning. Argumentation was the basic structure in the development of logic. The Qur’an asks: “What makes you understand what it is?” (101:10). Through argumentation, the Qur’an introduces *al-hadd wal-burhan*, which means the evidential logic, saying, “Or, Who originates creation” then repeats it, “And who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allah,” “Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!” (27:64). The Qur’an also asks the learner to call for proof, as in “Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful” (2:111). An example of both argumentation and calling for proof is when the prophet Ibrahim asked Allah to prove that He could revive the dead: “Behold! Ibrahim said: My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead. He (God) said: Dost thou not then believe? He said: Yes! But to satisfy my own understanding” (2:260). This verse confirms that asking for proof is encouraged in the educational curriculum of the Qur’an.



In addition to questioning and using argumentation, the Qur'an clarifies the danger of accepting any assumption, whether theological or scientific, without any proof: "And follow not that of which you have not the (certain) knowledge..." (17:36). In many instances, the Qur'an questions unbelievers' thoughts and ideas and works to convince them by providing evidence from their surroundings. For example, nonbelievers used to justify their rejection of worshipping Allah by arguing that they should not accept one God because their ancestors had worshipped different idols. Curriculum in the Qur'an responds to their argument by inviting them to use their reason:

When he (Abraham) said to his father and his people: "What is it that you worship?" they said, "We worship idols; and we are ever devoted to them." Abraham said: "Do they hear you when you invoke them? Or do they benefit you or harm you?" They replied: "But we found our forefathers doing the same." Abraham said: "So, have you considered what you have been worshipping?" (26:70-75)

Prophet Ibrahim is an example of someone who rejected his people's beliefs, including his father's, when he realized that worshiping idols did not make any sense.

One more example of the Qur'an encouraging logical thinking is when Allah speaks to the prophet Mohammad, who was not able to read or write, refuting nonbelievers' accusation that the Qur'an was written by Mohammad:

O (Muhammad) thou hast never been able to recite any divine writ ere this one (was revealed), nor didst thou ever transcribe one with your own hand or else, they who try to disprove the truth (of thy revelation) might indeed have had cause to doubt (it). (29: 48)

If the prophet never knew how to read or write in his entire life, Allah says, it is not logically possible for Mohammad to write a book like the Qur'an.

**Critical thinking in the literature.** The fourth requirement in the Qur'an's curriculum is developing critical thinking. Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed (2012), president of Islamic Research Foundation International, outlined that approximately 1,100 verses in the Qur'an emphasize "The importance of thinking, reflecting and pondering on the signs (natural phenomena) of Allah" (p. 1). Muslim scholar Khan (1997) confirmed my findings about critical thinking and further explained that the new, practical logic called al-hadd wal-burhan was developed on the basis of critical thinking and a system of argumentation (p. 132).

### **Spirituality**

The last major requirement in the Qur'an's curriculum is spirituality. Spirituality unifies all aspects of life as it recognizes and accepts all types of students and ethnic groups. Curriculum in the Qur'an deals with spirituality in two ways. First, the Qur'an obliges every Muslim to seek knowledge, and then it connects the intelligence of the heart and mind, as in "Have they not hearts with which to understand" (9:87). By seeking knowledge, humans are able to know more about Allah, which leads them closer to Him and therefore develops their spirituality.

Secondly, curriculum in the Qur'an reflects that our deeds affect our souls: "Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds" (74:38) and "Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul..." (41:46). The Qur'an also indicates that each individual decides his own position: "Verily Allah will not deal unjustly with man in aught: It is man that wrongs his own soul" (10:44). Additionally, the more good deeds a person does, the closer to Allah he gets, and

the more spiritual he becomes: “So fear Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey and spend in charity for the benefit of your own soul and those saved from the covetousness of their own souls,- they are the ones that achieve prosperity” (64:16) and “Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you” (49:13). This is to say that a person’s deeds affect his soul and therefore his spirituality, as in “If any one does a righteous deed, it ensures to the benefit of his own soul; if he does evil, it works against (his own soul). In the end will ye (all) be brought back to your Lord” (45:15) and “Verily We have revealed the book to thee in truth, for (instructing) mankind. He, then, that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul...” (39:41). Therefore, each individual gains spiritual and material success through the application of Qur’anic teachings. When the Qur’an provides guidance, it is always combined with moral lessons that improve human life as a whole.

**Spirituality in the literature.** The fifth requirement in curriculum in the Qur’an is spirituality and its relationship to intellectual development. Muslim scholars agreed that “Education must be made equally for both, mind and spirit. Acquiring knowledge is not intended as an end but as a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness, leading to faith and righteous action” (Abdullah, 1982, p. 173). Curriculum in the Qur’an shows people the importance of seeking knowledge through questioning and the use of logic, while at the same time building and developing spirituality in order to achieve success in this life and the hereafter. Nasr (1984) confirmed this idea but changed the emphasis from the present to the afterlife. He wrote, “That while education does prepare humans for happiness in this life, its ultimate goal is

the abode of permanence and all education points to the permanent world of eternity” (p. 7). Hassan, Norhasni, and Ahmad (2011) confirmed my conclusion, writing, “Intellectual growth without spiritual development is aimless wandering and spiritual development without the intellectual component is meaningless” (p. 2117); that is, the development of the self should be towards developing the human as a whole.

Dr. Hamm (2012) agreed that curriculum in the Qur’an is based on one main principle, which is to develop humans “Socially, ethically, emotionally and physically in order to achieve complete submission to Allah” (p. 225). Additionally, Al-Attas (1979) confirmed this as he explained that in the Qur’an, education “Is directed toward the balanced growth of the total personality...through training Man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses...such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality” (p. 158).

Additionally, many Western scholars asserted the need to developing students’ cognitive, moral, and spiritual abilities as a whole. Miller (2005), wrote:

The Swiss humanitarian Johann Pestalozzi, the American Transcendentalists, Thoreau, Emerson and Alcott, the founders of “progressive” education, Francis Parker, John Dewey, Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, among others, all insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child. (p. 1)

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I introduced the meaning of the word “curriculum” in Arabic followed by an explanation of the reasons for not providing a clear definition of educational theory. I also explained how, using specific verses from the Qur’an, curriculum in the Qur’an encourages seeking knowledge and describes the behaviors of

knowledgeable people to make it easier for learners to comprehend and follow. Later I identified aspects of the Qur'an's curriculum in terms of the necessity of applying knowledge, having an intention behind seeking and applying knowledge, recognition of the self, development of critical thinking, and spirituality. After each section, I turned to the literature to examine other viewpoints and identify whether scholarly literature supports or disconfirms my analysis.

The main concern of curriculum in the Qur'an is building a balanced human personality that does not neglect spirituality. Following these commands and traditions in acquiring knowledge, early Muslim rulers, especially at the time of the Abbasid beginning with the popular Harun al-Rashid, encouraged all Muslims to acquire learning. The historian Nakosteen (1964) found that Harun al-Rashid gave considerable support to educational institutions, which led to making elementary education almost universal amongst Muslims at that time, as he wrote: "Education was so universally diffused that it was said to be difficult to find a Muslim who could not read or write" (p.45). Most countries throughout the world today mandate that all children should attend school.

After studying the collected data and examining the literature, I reached two conclusions. The first is that all Muslims are commanded to seek knowledge throughout their entire lives because those who have knowledge "Tread the path of righteousness (*taqwa*)" (35:28). This verse and other data collected drew me to conclude that learning and seeking knowledge are not a personal choice; seeking knowledge is an order from Allah that must be fulfilled. People may choose the field of study they wish according to

their needs or market demands, but seeking knowledge is a basic mandate in curriculum in the Qur'an.

The second conclusion is that curriculum in the Qur'an follows a holistic approach. The holistic approach stands in contrast to the equivalent of a banking system in which educators deposit information into students' minds for safekeeping. For a holist, learning takes place by interaction between the learner and the environment in a democratic classroom where "Teachers and students are continually reflecting on themselves and the world, establishing an authentic form of thought and action" (Freire, 1998, p. 65). The holistic approach pays more attention to the necessity of balance among intellectual, physical, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual development. This approach also employs cognition "To perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1998, p. 64).

Holism is not a new approach to education; it was practiced long ago in China and India (Ismail & Hassan, 2009, p. 231). Additionally, some scholars consider Socrates a holist because of his opinions encouraging people to know themselves and to be familiar with their needs, as in his famous "Know thyself" quote (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012, p. 179). Additionally, holistic educators are interested in developing the whole person in relation to society, the community, the environment, and the universe. Mahmoudi et al. (2012) confirms that holism "... aims for the fullest possible human development enabling a person to become the very best or finest that they can be" (p. 178). As seen from the collected data, curriculum in the Qur'an acknowledges and

encourages the holistic approach. Both curriculum in the Qur'an and the holistic approach prepare people with skills and values to help them live and connect with their surroundings, and both encourage people to seek knowledge through critical thinking and the use of logic while at the same time building and developing spirituality.

## Chapter Four - Instruction in the Qur'an

### **Curriculum as Instruction in the Qur'an**

In this chapter, the word “curriculum” refers to instructions or methods of education adapted from Blenkin et al. (1992) as in “The process by which these (subject matter) are transmitted or ‘delivered’ to students by the most effective methods that can be devised” (p. 23). In other words, curriculum here refers to methods of teaching used in the Qur'an.

To have a better understanding of the methods of teaching in the Qur'an, I will start by introducing ideology, the fundamental beliefs in the Qur'an, followed by an explanation of change, the purpose for instructions in the Qur'an. Then I will introduce my findings in regard to the methods of teaching used in the Qur'an.

### **Main Principles in the Qur'an**

The primary basis of Qur'an is *Tawheed*, the oneness of Allah. Many verses explain and emphasize Tawheed. Surah 112 in the Qur'an is dedicated to describing the oneness of Allah, saying, “He is the One God. God the eternal, the uncaused cause of all being. Allah begetteth not nor is He begotten. Allah: there is none like unto Him. And there is nothing that could be compared with Him” (112:1-4). Reading this surah is considered by Muslims to be equal to reading one third of the Qur'an, as it stresses the most fundamental theme of the Qur'an — the oneness of Allah. There are three main themes in the Qur'an: the oneness of Allah, the human-God relationship, and the Day of Judgment. In addition to surah 112, a verse considered by Muslims to be the greatest in



the Qur'an is called *ayah al-Kursi*, or the verse of the throne. It, too, emphasizes the oneness of Allah:

There is no god but He, the living, the self-subsisting, the eternal. No slumber nor sleep can seize him. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in his presence except as he permitted? He knoweth what lies before them (his creation) and after them. Nor shall they compass aught of his knowledge except as He willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth and he feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for He is the most high, the supreme.  
(2:255)

For Muslims, this verse confirms that Allah is the Lord of all creation, that no one can be worshipped other than Him, that He is the only one living forever and never dies, and that He is the sustainer of the whole universe. In other words, Allah is one and there is nothing like Him.

The second main principle in the Quran is that Allah is able to create all people to be believers and worshippers of Him, as indicated in “If it had been God’s plan, they would not have taken false gods...” (6:107). In this verse Allah tells humans that while He creates all humans as believers, He also decided to give people freedom of choice. Several verses in the Qur'an emphasize that it is Allah’s plan to create people with freedom of choice. One example states, “Had He willed not (to giving humans the freedom of choice), He would have made every human being a believer altogether (10:99)<sup>7</sup>.

Although the Qur'an declares, “This Qur'an is the truth coming down from your Sustainer” (18:29), it still gives humans the choice to believe in it or reject it, as in

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<sup>7</sup> The parentheses in the verses are added by the translator of the Qur'an to explain meaning. I copied the verses as they are without adding anything to them

“Hence, whoever wants to accept or reject this code of conduct is free to do so, but before making any choice, each individual must use its intelligence and perception to make the right choice” (18:29). Another verse states, “Every soul draws the meed? of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another, your return in the end is towards Allah” (6:164). Other verses are 17:15 and 35:18. The ideology of the curriculum in the Qur’an encourages people to enjoy the freedom of choice, including the choice to enter the faith of Islam as in “There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error...” (2:256).

The third and final foundation of the Qur’an is that people are accountable to Allah for all their choices even while they have freedom of choice. Allah will judge people and ask them about all their actions regardless of how tiny those actions are. This is clear in the verse that reads “So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it” (99:7-8). Life is fundamentally a test for a person, which is stated clearly in: “He who created death and life to test you (as to) which of you is best in deed” (67:2). Another verse that confirms the accountability of each individual reads, “Truly he succeeds that purifies it (the soul). And he fails that corrupts it” (91:7-10). Whoever does good deeds will purify his soul and go to heaven after death, and whoever does evil will corrupt his soul and be sent to hell.

The story of the creation of Adam highlights the concepts of freedom of choice and accountability. It teaches people that all choices have consequences, and people must think and decide for themselves. When Allah created Adam, He taught him the names of things, and then He left Adam to wander freely in heaven:

And He said: “O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein as wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the wrong-doers. (2:35)

It was Adam who chose to eat from the forbidden tree and, as a consequence of this choice, Adam was descended to Earth. Allah only forgave Adam after he showed repentance for the choice he had made: “Then Adam received from his Lord some words, and He accepted his repentance...” (2:37).

Accountability is not unique to religions. In all societies, religious or atheist, those who break a rule are held accountable for the consequences.

In the Qur’an there are some exceptions to humans’ liability and their freedom of choice. The prophet Mohammad lists these exceptions: “There are no deeds good or evil recorded for the following: the insane person until he becomes sane; a child until he grows to the age of puberty; and a sleeping person until he awakes” (*Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 5, No. 4398). This *hadith* asserts that after children reach the age of puberty, they become responsible for their own choices and actions. It also confirms that the insane cannot make decisions for themselves and are therefore, not accountable for actions committed while insane. Likewise, a sleeping person cannot be held accountable for actions committed while asleep. Another verse to confirm accountability is:

You have complete freedom of choice, and you may select any way of life you want. But Allah’s system based upon eternal code is watching your every move and results of your action shall be compiled upon the basis of our infinite knowledge. (41:40)

In other words, curriculum in the Qur’an asks its followers to think about and measure each step before taking it, because Allah did not create us for nothing, and we are

accountable for our choices: “Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us?” (23: 115). These three fundamental concepts — the oneness of Allah, freedom of choice, and human accountability — form the bases of ideology in the Qur’an.

### **Main Principles in the Literature**

The Qur’anic scholar Amro Khaled (2005) confirmed the bases for the Qur’anic main principles that I introduced as he explained that reading the Qur’an methodologically reveals its three main themes: the oneness of Allah, that man has freedom of choice, and that each individual is responsible for his actions that bear fruit accordingly. All topics in the Qur’an are built around these basic themes, and they are reinforced constantly (Khaled, 2005). Muslims believe in the absolute power of Allah which is established, whether creatures submit to it or not. Irrespective of anyone’s approval or denial, Allah’s supreme power exists all around us. This main concept of monotheism is summarized by Karolia (1999):

Allah is the one God. He has no partner. He is All Powerful, Absolutely Just. He is The First, The Last and The Everlasting, He was when nothing was, and will be when nothing remains. He only grants life and knows what is in the Heavens and the earth. He knows what is in our hearts and listens to the entire creation. He sent all the prophets to guide man to Worship only Him. (Islam section, para. 1)

Hassan Hathout (2008) asserted the sovereignty of Allah and confirmed His creation of humans with freedom of choice. He explained that the most significant belief in the Qur’an is that Allah created man and provided him with four principal qualities unique to humankind: “Knowledge, an awareness of good and evil, freedom of choice and accountability” (p. 6). Hathout continues that the human brain has the ability to

“Observe, rationalize, analyze, experiment and conclude” (p. 6). Therefore, humans have the ability to comprehend, differentiate between matters, and choose. Abdul Sattar Kassem (2012), professor of political science at Najah National University, supported this idea as he wrote, “Man has been created with the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, and an ability to choose between purification and corruption” (p. 168).

Moreover, Nabil Al-Najjar (2010), professor of managerial economics and decision sciences at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, asserts that Allah created people and asked them to observe and ponder the universe to learn and then to decide what to follow. Sayed Rabinataj and Rmezan Azadboni (2011) from the department of theology at the University of Mazandaran explained that the Qur’an encourages people to enjoy their freedom of choice but at the same time be mindful that “Unlimited liberty in any social setup means its total destruction, which beats the very purpose of freedom in the first place” (p. 8).

### **Change in the Qur’an**

Curriculum in the Qur’an deals with changing people and helping them adopt new rules and regulations. Allah, as the Creator of humans, knows that true changes in human behavior cannot happen merely by asking people to follow new rules. Change is a gradual process that takes time and energy, which is one of the reasons behind revealing the Qur’an in 23 years. This length of time was needed by the prophet Mohammad in order to reform and construct a new society. Additionally, this time was needed for his followers to be reformed and become reformers themselves. Curriculum in the Qur’an changed Muslim society in stages to make it easier on people at that time, as promised in

the Qur'an: "A discourse which We have gradually unfolded, so that thou might read it out to mankind by stages, seeing that We have bestowed it from on high step by step, as (one) revelation" (17:106).

One example from the Qur'an of change presented in stages is the phasing out of intoxicating substances. Drinking alcohol was part of people's lives at that time, but over a period of ten years intoxicating substances were prohibited in stages. The Arabic word *al-Khamr* includes all types of intoxicants, whether wine or drugs. The first step was revelation of this verse: "They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit..." (2:219). This verse clarifies that there are some beneficial aspects of alcohol, but the negative aspects are greater. This verse helped Muslims not only recognize the negative effects of drinking but also consider it an evil that should be avoided. The second step came with the revelation that prohibited Muslims from performing prayers while intoxicated, saying, "Oh you who have attained to faith! Do not attempt to pray while you are in a state of drunkenness, but wait until you know what you are saying" (4:43). This verse caused Muslims to change their drinking habits. Muslims must pray five times a day, so they restrained themselves from drinking until after the last prayer of the day, late in the evening. By following this verse, Muslims adapted to consuming less alcohol. Some of them drank after the evening prayer only, and some ceased all alcohol consumption. By following this verse Muslims prepared for a change in lifestyle. After few years, as people had become accustomed to very little consumption of *al-Khamr*, the third and final step was revealed:

Oh you who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing. Shun it, so that you may attain a happy state. By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God, and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist? (5:90-91)

These two verses declare that all intoxicants are intended to move people away from Allah, and that by consuming al-Khamr people lose all mental abilities, making them more susceptible to following Satan's doing. After the revelation of these verses, people stopped drinking and al-Khamr was prohibited completely. Most prohibitions were handed down similarly, in stages.

### **Change in the Literature**

The purpose of the Qur'an's curriculum is to teach people to make changes towards a better life. The teachings of the Qur'an transformed the lives of Arabs dramatically, eradicating many habits in practice at the time of revelation. Generally, Arabs believed in spirits, demons, and had many different gods to worship. They were idolaters as each tribe had its own idol around Kaaba (Margoliouth, 1931). The Qur'an described Arab life before Islam as living in a time of ignorance (81:8). Arab society before Islam was considered a male dominant society where females had no status and were sold as property. Arabs used to bury their baby daughters alive because they considered having a baby daughter a shame, so they buried them alive (Hasan, 2009). Arabs were heavy drinkers with uncontrolled sexual relationships. The Qur'an was able to change people's lives dramatically through stages. Revealing the Qur'an in 23 years was a major factor behind such gradual cultural transformations.

## **Didactic Methods in the Qur'an**

Now, I will examine the teaching methods that exist within the Qur'an. Through my reading I found that the Qur'an uses different methodologies to teach its followers, such as commands, repetition, parables, storytelling, and demonstration.

### **Commands**

One of the teaching methods found in the Qur'an is the command. The Qur'an uses controlling language, or the language of authority, to tell people what to do and to influence their decisions. Muslims believe that Allah speaks in the Qur'an and people are to listen to His words. A Muslim's expected response to Allah's words as indicated by "We hear and obey" (2:285). Allah educates people by speaking with the voice of authority, and people learn by listening to His words and reading the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, Allah speaks to humans using authoritative words to guide them to the path of knowledge: "This is the Book, about it there can be no doubt; it is a path for those who are aware of God" (2:2).

One of Allah's commands is to order people to read the Qur'an to learn and educate themselves: "Read in the name of your Lord" (96:1). In the first revelation of the Qur'an, the angel Gabriel commanded the prophet Mohammad, "Read!" The prophet Mohammad did not know how to read or write, like most of his community in Mecca. Therefore, he responded, "I am not a reader." The angel Gabriel repeated his command three times, and each time the prophet responded with the same answer. After the third time, the angel Gabriel revealed the first five verses:



Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created all that exists. He has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not. (96:1-5)

During the first contact between the angel Gabriel and the prophet Mohammad, Gabriel is the teacher, who commands his student, Mohammad, to read.

Additionally, Allah demands that people listen to the Qur'an: "Hence, when the Qur'an is voiced, hearken unto it, and listen in silence, so that you might be graced with (God's) mercy" (7:204). This is to say, when people read or listen to the Qur'an, they must try to comprehend its guidance and apply what they have learned: "A book we have sent down to thee, blessed, that men possessed of mind may ponder its signs and so remember" (38:29). A main purpose of the Qur'an is to teach and guide. Muslims are to read and listen to the Qur'an to understand the laws, rules, obligations, prohibitions, and other practices as set forth by Allah. In addition, the Qur'an must be felt as well as understood because it addresses the heart as well as the mind:

Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book, its parts resembling each other (in goodness and truth) (and) oft-repeated. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it (when they recite it or hear it). Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah... (39:23)

Verse 39:23 explains that Qur'an belongs to everyone, free of distinction and of hierarchy. No mediator between Allah and humans is required, as all people can approach Allah directly: "Indeed, I am close at hand; I answer the call of the one who calls me when he calls" (2:186). The Qur'an is available to everyone to read or listen to and study the curriculum contained within, which means there is no excuse for humans not to read it and try to comprehend its teachings.

Curriculum in the Qur'an commands its adherents to read it in order to learn and follow Allah's instructions in order to have happy, successful lives. As is the case with other religious texts, the Qur'an contains orders and prohibitions too numerous to be listed here. People are to obey Allah's rules as the command, "O you who believe obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from amongst you" (4:59). However, there are two types of rules. The first type that all followers of the religion must adhere to encompasses the five pillars of Islam:

The superstructure of al-Islam is raised on five (pillars), testifying (the fact) that there is no god but Allah, that Mohammad is His bondsman and messenger, and the establishment of prayer, payment of Zakat, the fast of Ramadan and Pilgrimage to the House (Ka'ba). (*Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 2, No. 7)

In addition to the five pillars, some rules and prohibitions are fundamental teachings and cannot be changed. Prohibitions include murder: "And do not take any human being's life which God has willed to be sacred" (17:33); adultery: "And come not near unto adultery; surely, it is a foul thing and an evil way" (17:33); and not to accept interest: "O you who have attained to faith! Do not gorge yourselves on usury, doubling and re-doubling it - but remain conscious of God, so that you might attain to a happy state" (3:130)

The second type of rule is the kind that can be modified according to time and place, such as social rules. One example is "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice..." (4:58). In this verse Allah is asking people to judge with justice, which is not static.

**Command language in the literature.** There are not many references to the Qur'an's command language as a teaching method. What Abdel Haleem (2005) wrote in regard to dialogue in the Qur'an comes closest to supporting my finding that the Qur'an uses command language. Haleem explained that one of the characteristics of style in the Qur'an is the use of dialogue. Allah speaks directly to people, as in "Have you ever considered the water which you drink? Is it you who cause it to come down from the clouds - or are We the cause of its coming down?" (56:58-59). He added that the Qur'an

...involves the readers/listeners by questioning, directing, and urging them, alternating this with information (e.g. 56:47-74). The Quran is also full of dialogue between God and His prophets (e.g. Abraham in 2:260; Noah in 11:45-8), between prophets and their audiences (e.g. Salih and the Thamud people in 11:61-5), and between different individuals (e.g. Solomon and the hoopoe, Solomon and his chieftains, and the Queen of Sheba talking to her advisers, all in 27:19-44). (Abdel Haleem, 2001, p. 200)

### **Repetition**

The second teaching method that exists in the Qur'an is repetition. As explained in the literature review, the Qur'an existed as verbal recitation before it became a written text. Therefore, the prophet Mohammad repeated each revelation to his followers in order for them to learn and memorize the new teachings. From the revelation of the Qur'an until the present, millions of Muslims have used repetition to memorize the Qur'an.

Because humans forget easily, repetition is used as a reminder of the main themes and teachings introduced: "It is but a reminder and a (divine) discourse, clear in itself and clearly showing the truth" (36:69) and "This (divine writ), behold, is no less than a reminder to all the worlds" (38:87). Other verses confirming the use of repetition as a reminder include 68:52, 40:54 and 88:21-22. Repetition is used as a teaching method

throughout the Qur'an. Certain topics are repeated several times in different parts of the Qur'an. Two types of repetition occur in the Qur'an: direct and indirect. Direct repetition refers to repeating the same verse with exactly the same words. An example is the verse "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?" (Surah 55). This verse is repeated 33 times in the same surah. Whenever Allah mentions any of His favors in this surah, he asks, "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?" as a way to draw the reader's or listener's attention toward this favor.

Another example of direct repetition is the first verse of the Qur'an. It says, "By the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful" (1:1). This verse is mentioned at the beginning of all surahs of the Qur'an except one. Repetition of the same teachings confirms that these are the rules that Allah wants people to learn, follow, and comprehend. The repetition of verse (1:1) at the beginning at each surah reminds the reader or listener to reflect and see things the way Allah wants people to see them.

The second form of repetition, indirect, refers to using different words to introduce the same concept in order to reach different types of learners. Sometimes, reading about the same topic several times might bore the reader. However, reading about the same topic in different words gives the reader new meanings with each reading and ensures his understanding of the topic. Indirect repetition is used to complete and add new information to the meaning of the verses in general. For example, the story of the prophet Adam is told in verses 2:34-37, 3:59, 7:11, 7:26, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116 and 36:60. The story is phrased differently several times in order to teach a new lesson each time and to fit within the theme of the surah in which it is being retold. As explained earlier, the

story of creation of Adam was once told to teach people that they have freedom of choice and that they are responsible for their actions. Another time it was introduced to inform the reader that Adam was created to be the vicegerent of Allah on earth; therefore people are to rise to this expectation. A third time the creation of Adam was mentioned to teach people how Satan deceived Adam into eating from the tree, and as a result he was descended to earth. This time the story of Adam was repeated to teach people not to follow Satan and to think and consider the consequences before taking any action.

Repetition also is used as a teaching method to build certain concepts in the reader's consciousness. Repetition strengthens the messages taught and emphasizes the arguments presented. Many verses assert the oneness of Allah and the fact that He created the whole universe. Repetition of Allah's teachings and guidance help people believe these teachings in their hearts and adopt them in their lives.

**Repetition in the literature.** Muslim scholars agree that repetition in the Qur'an may not cause dullness and exhaustion because it is not our words; the Qur'an is Allah's words. Muslims believe that the more words are repeated, the better understanding and appreciation of its greatness a person obtains. The repetition becomes one aspect of the Qur'an's miraculousness. Theologian Nursi (1998) wrote in his explanation of the Qur'an, "Repetition in the Qur'an does not cause boredom and weariness, but enhances the beauty and increases eagerness" (p. 151). He also confirms my finding that the repetition of stories in the Qur'an serves to present a different aspect or new theme, or to emphasize a new angle each time a story is told. He used an example of the story of the prophet Moses:

Sometimes the birth of Moses is focused on in the story, and his upbringing, and his appointment to prophet hood. In another, it is the obduracy of the unbelievers that is emphasized, and the fates they suffered. Then in yet another, in Surah al-Mu'min, the very different scene of a member of Pharaoh's household is depicted. Then in Surah Ta Ha the story is told of Samiri and the calf of the Children of Israel. Thus, different points are emphasized on every occasion. Each place the story is repeated a new meaning emerges, a different exemplary scene is given, and a different meaning is emphasized. (p. 153)

Harun Yahya (2005) looked at repetition in the Qur'an in a different way.

He counted the occurrence of certain words that mean something for Muslims and wrote, "Apart from the miraculous characteristics of the Qur'an which we have looked into so far, it also contains what we can term 'mathematical miracles.'"

By "mathematical miracles" he refers to "The number of repetitions of certain words in the Qur'an." For example, he wrote:

"Day" (yawm) is repeated 365 times in singular form... The number of repetitions of the word "month" (shahar) is 12... The word "faith" (iman) (without genitive) is repeated 25 times throughout the Qur'an as is also the word "infidelity" (kufr)... The words "paradise" and "hell" are each repeated 77 times... The words "wine" (khamr) and "intoxication" (saqara) are repeated in the Qur'an the same number of times: 6. (p. 317-318)

## **Parables**

Parables represent events that may or may not be real in order to convey a lesson to the reader. The Qur'an explains its use of parable with this verse: "Indeed, We have offered in this Qur'an every evidence and lesson by way of parables and examples for people so that they may think and take heed" (39:27) and in this verse: "So God propounds parables for human beings, that they may reflect on them and infer the necessary lessons" (14:25). Parables make it easier for people to comprehend new lessons

and reflect on them. The Qur'an uses parables to help people connect their learning with their own lives. An example of the use of parable in the Qur'an is in:

Art thou not aware how God sets forth the parable of a good word? (It is) like a good tree, firmly rooted, (reaching out) with its branches towards the sky, yielding its fruit at all times by its Sustainer's leave. And (thus it is that) God propounds parables unto men, so that they might think themselves (of the truth). (14:24-25)

“Good word” refers to any moral act or idea that is beneficent and enduring. The verse calls for spreading good conducts. People can benefit from spreading the good word the same way as they benefit from a tree in more than one way by eating the fruit of a tree and sitting under its shade.

One of the Qur'an's parables was used in Chapter 4 to describe people who have knowledge and do not use it to benefit themselves or the world around them, as in:

The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) law, but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey that carries huge tomes (but understands them not). Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the Sign of God: And God guides not people who do wrong. (62:5)

This comparison describes people who have knowledge but ignore the signs of Allah in the universe and everything around them as donkeys. The donkey's job is to carry things on its back without understanding what he is carrying or obtaining any wisdom from his burden. Therefore having knowledge without applying it is like the donkey carrying burdens without knowing the value of what he is carrying. The verse also shows how parables connect the lesson to everyday human life, followed by a description of the act and its expected results to improve understanding of the required meaning.

To encourage people to spend for the sake of Allah, as in helping the needy or participating in activities benefiting humans in general, the Qur'an uses this parable:

The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is ample-giving, knowing. (2:261)

The verse clarifies that spending for the sake of Allah provides the same benefits as planting corn. The corn will grow with seven ears, and each ear has enough grains to benefit many people. Another example of parable used in the Qur'an describes the actions of disbelievers:

The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their actions are like ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day; they shall not have power over anything out of what they have earned; this is the great error. (14:18)

The verse explains that no matter how much good a disbeliever may have done, he will not benefit from his actions. Disbelievers' actions, like ashes in the wind, are worthless. The Qur'an uses this parable to convince disbelievers of their need to worship and have faith in Allah.

**Parables in the literature.** There is not much written in literature in regard to the use of parable in the Qur'an. The Qur'an uses daily life examples in the form of parables to explain its teachings and laws. Using examples in teaching is one of the most successful didactic methods. Al-Khalediy (2011) wrote that "It is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to ask advice in all matters, and he sets a parable that 'God commanded even his Messenger to ask counsel about all of his affairs'" (p. 41). Using



examples from real life to connect ideas to students' lives makes such ideas easier for students to understand.

### **Storytelling**

The fourth teaching method found within the Qur'an is storytelling. The Qur'an tells different types of stories; some of them are well known to believers of faiths that came before Islam.<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an states, "We relate to you, the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Qur'an although you were, before it, among the unaware" (12:3). Storytelling informs the reader and teaches him about the past or that which is unknown to him. The Qur'an reveals the reason for using storytelling, stating, "All that we relate to thee of the stories of the messengers, with it We make firm thy heart: in them there cometh to thee the Truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of remembrance to those who believe" (11:120). Some stories are used to support the prophet Mohammad in his messages and to strengthen the faith of his followers. Some stories tell of historical events, such as stories of the prophets, and others represent a moral purpose or lesson to be learned and remembered.

Curriculum in the Qur'an tells the history of previous nations and the rise and fall of earlier empires. It informs the reader of the lives of other prophets who came before the prophet Mohammad, such as prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) in surah 14, prophet Joseph in surah 12, Nuh (Noah) in surah 71, Hud in surah 11, and Isa (Jesus) in surah 19, as well as the prophet Mohammad in surah 47. The Qur'an also includes stories of people other

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<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an acknowledges and asks its followers to believe in all faiths that were revealed before the time of the prophet Mohammad, such as Christianity and Judaism. Muslims do not acknowledge faiths introduced after the prophet Mohammad.

than the prophets, as the story of Bilqis in surah 27, Dhul Qarnain in surah 18, People of the Cave and People of the Garden in surah 18, and the wise Luqman in surah 31.

Sometimes the Qur'an tells only selected parts of a story at a time rather than telling the entire story at once. This partial storytelling is due to the theme of the surah in which the story is told. Therefore, the reader may find different stories mentioned in one surah. For example, surah 21 is called *al-Anbiya*, the Prophets, and it describes the struggle of the prophets with their people. This surah includes stories of different prophets, such as Moses, Ibrahim, Lut, Isaac, David, and Solomon.

Another purpose for storytelling in the Qur'an is to teach a certain moral or message. For example, the story of the prophet Ibrahim mentioned in Chapter Four describes the prophet Ibrahim's steps of reasoning to conclude that the sun, moon, and stars could not have created the universe, and thus there must be a greater power behind this creation. The story describes the event as it happened so that the reader may follow in Ibrahim's steps and think critically. The purpose of this story is to encourage critical thinking, as explained in Chapter Four.

Another example of the use of storytelling as moral instruction comes from surah five. To teach people to follow the orders prescribed to them, the Qur'an tells the story of the prophets of *Bani Israel*, the Jews, including Moses, and how they ruled by following Allah's commands in the Torah:

Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto... (5:44)

The story continues as the prophet Isa, known as Jesus, is shown also to have ruled his people according to Allah's revelation in the *Injeel*, or Bible:

And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous. And let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed therein... (5:46-47)

After relating that the prophets Moses and Isa were following Allah's rules, the verses assert that the prophet Mohammad ruled his people according to Allah's revelation in the Qur'an:

And We have revealed to you, (O Mohammad) the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth. To each of you We prescribed a law and a method... (5:48)

Through storytelling the Qur'an shows people that following commands is standard in all faiths and by all prophets and their followers, and that the current followers of religion should adhere to the same procedure and follow Allah's rules. Other verses illustrating this are 5:49, 4:105, 6:114, and 2:213.

Another story used in the Qur'an to send a message or to teach a certain topic is that of the prophet Solomon and Bilqis, Ber Sheva (the Queen of Sheba). When Queen Bilqis received the prophet Solomon's letter inviting her to submit to Allah and stop worshipping the sun, she called for a meeting with tribal leaders. She asked for their advice after she confirmed that she had never taken any political decision without consulting them. She said, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness (for) me" (27:32). Their response was, "We are fierce and

courageous fighters. Yet, the affairs are now at your hands to see what commands you would like to give” (27: 33). This story illustrates the importance of consultation in making decisions, and it is followed immediately by a command to the prophet Mohammad to oversee his community affairs by means of mutual consultation. One of these verses is “So overlook their performance and seek forgiveness for them and consult them in the affair” (3:159). As a result, the prophet Mohammad consulted his people in almost all affairs.

None of the storytelling in the Qur’an includes the time or date of the stories. Sometimes the Qur’an introduces the place or the main characters of the stories, as in the story of the Queen of Sheba mentioned above, while at other times it does not identify the characters or setting. The main focus is on the situation, people’s actions, and the results of those actions. An example of this is the story (18:32-42) of a man who has two beautiful, productive vineyards surrounded by date palm trees with a river running through them. The owner of the land tells his friend, “I am more than you in wealth and stronger in respect of men” (18:34). Looking proudly at his vineyard, he continues, “I think not that this will ever perish. And I think not the hour will ever come, and if indeed I am brought back to my Lord, (on the Day of Resurrection), I surely shall find better than this when I return to Him” (18:36). His friend responds, “Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you out of dust, then out of Nutfah (mixed semen and female fluids), then fashioned you into a man?” (18:37). The friend reminds the owner that these gardens are blessings from Allah, that he should be grateful to Him and that anything could happen to his gardens. Later, when the two gardens were destroyed, the owner,

Remained clapping his hands (with sorrow) over what he had spent upon it, while it was all destroyed on its trellises, and he could only say: “Would that I had ascribed no partners to my Lord!” And he had no group of men to help him against Allah, nor could he defend (or save) himself. (18:42-43)

The purpose of this story is to teach people to be grateful to Allah and have no doubts about His powers. The most important part of this story is not the time or place, but rather the underlying lesson.

Storytelling is used in the Qur’an to support believers, present new information and help people think and reflect, as indicated in “Indeed, in the stories of the prophets there is a lesson for those who are endowed with insight, with deep understanding...” (12:111).

**Storytelling in the literature.** Sayyed Qutb (1960) clarified the reasons behind the use of storytelling in the Qur’an:

1. To explain the foundations of the prophet Sharia and the prophets were to raise it (Prophets: 25)<sup>9</sup>
2. To stabilize the heart of the prophet Mohammad believers and followers of the Prophet of Islam, strengthening trust in God (Hood / 120)
3. To confirm previous prophets (AL / 93)
4. To reveal the Divine in the form of stories (moon / 4-5)
5. To express divine justice in the punishment of rejecters (Hood / 101)

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<sup>9</sup> In this quotation the first word between brackets refers to the name of the surah in the Quran and the number refers to the number of the verse.

6. To encourage and comfort the prophet against the rejecters (fater / 25-26).
7. To convey consciousness and evangelism (AH / 1, Taha, 113, salinity / 7, gratuities / 19)
8. To emphasize how the prophets and messengers of God related to the people (p. 117- 128)

Sayyed Qutb's explanation of the reasons behind storytelling confirms my findings; however, I missed his points in numbers four and seven. Dr. Narges Shekarbigi and Noor (2012) from the Department of Quran and Hadith Sciences at Payam Noor University explains that sometimes storytelling in the Qur'an does not mention the date, place, or time of the story because:

The focus is not on the people, but is instead on the situation that they are in. These situations can apply to other individuals in different times and places. One such example is the story of the prophet Adam's two sons (5:27- 31). (p. 8641)

Additionally, Mawdudi (1987) explained that stories of old nations and the consequences of their choices help readers comprehend those experiences and help them make their own choices. Hamid (2004) confirmed this point as he wrote that the Qur'an uses storytelling to "Link the Prophet, his companions and successors with the historical dimension" (Para 6).

### **Demonstration**

The Qur'an helps readers understand its teachings through demonstration that uses the descriptive, explanatory, legitimating, and affiliation forms of language to draw

a clear picture of what is to be taught. Demonstration makes it easier to convince people and help them follow the commands and avoid the prohibitions described.

**Descriptive language.** The descriptive form of language is used to connect the past to the present, the present to the future, or the real world to phenomenon. An example of the use of this form of language is the description of believers in this verse:

The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His *Ayat* are recited unto them, they increase their faith; and they put their trust in their Lord; Who perform prayers and spend out of that We have provided them. It is they who are the believers in it. For them are grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness and a generous provision (i.e., Paradise). (8:2-4)

This verse describes the actions of believers so that the reader may learn by example and behave as believers do. Another example is this verse describing life in heaven:

Verily, the dwellers of Paradise that Day, will be busy in joyful things. They and their wives will be in pleasant shade, reclining on thrones. They will have therein fruits (of all kinds), and all that they will ask for. (It will be said to them): “*Salamun*” (Peace be on you), a word from the Lord, Most Merciful. (36:55-58)

Describing life in heaven encourages people to act according to Allah’s rules and avoid His prohibitions so that they may enter heaven and enjoy its fruits.

Another example of demonstration using descriptive language is the following verse explaining the punishment of evildoers on the Day of Judgment:

Depart ye to a shadow (of smoke ascending) in three columns, (Which yields) no shade of coolness, and is of no use against the fierce blaze. Indeed it throws about sparks (huge) as forts, As if there were (a string of) yellow camels (marching swiftly). Ah woe, that day, to the rejecters of truth! That will be a day when they shall not be able to speak. Nor will it be open to them to put forth pleas. Ah woe, that day, to the rejecters of truth. (77:31-37)

This description of punishment for evil doers is followed immediately by a description of the fresh air and shady trees that are the reward for the righteous people: “As to the Righteous, They shall be amidst (cool) shades and springs (of water); And (they shall have) fruits, all they desire eat and drink ye to your heart’s content: for that ye worked” (77:41-43). The highly visual nature of the descriptions and the word choice in the original Arabic bring the experience to life for the reader.

Curriculum in the Qur’an also describes the appropriate way to read it, as in “Recite the Qur’an calmly and distinctly, with thy mind attuned to its meaning” (73:4), to make the commandment easier to understand and comprehend.

**Explanatory language.** The second form of demonstrative language used in the Qur’an is the explanatory form, which describes how things are done. For example, one verse demonstrating the creation of the sky asks, “Have they never observed the sky above them and marked how We built it up? And furnished it with ornaments leaving no crack in its expanse” (50:6-10). The Qur’an does not merely state “how We built it up,” but adds “and furnished it with ornaments leaving no crack in its expanse.” The Qur’an uses explanatory language to demonstrate the sky’s beauty by drawing the readers’ attention to how the sky is created without cracks or holes. Readers are asked to notice details instead of looking at the skies unthinkingly.

Another example of explanatory language may be found in these verses:

And when one of them is informed of the birth of a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide. (15:58-59)



These two verses demonstrate how Arabs used to react when told they had a baby girl, while at the same time describing the people's negative reaction as an evil act, which is another way of admonishing them not to react in such a way.

A further example of explanatory language is:

And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is (the enjoyment of) beauty when you bring them in (for the evening) and when you send them out (to pasture). And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is kind and merciful. And (He created) the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and (as) adornment... (16:5-8)

The verses explain that Allah created some animals for people to enjoy and how these animals make human lives easier. Explanatory language gives the details of why and how things function in order for people to comprehend and absorb lessons in the Qur'an.

**Legitimizing language.** In addition to explaining why and how things happen, the Qur'an also uses the legitimating form of language to convince people that what is happening is rational and just. For example, to convince a person that believing in Allah is the rational thing to do, the Qur'an provides the following verse:

How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were lifeless and He brought you to life; then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you (back) to life, and then to Him you will be returned. It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, (His being above all creation), and made them seven heavens, and He is knowing of all things. (2:28-29)

In order to convince people that Allah is the only one worthy of worship, this verse argues for belief based on showing Allah's powers in creating life and death. Another example of the use of legitimating language is the argument that happened when the prophet Ibrahim was trying to convince the king to worship Allah:

Art thou not aware of that (king) who argued with Abraham about his Sustainer, (simply) because God had granted him kingship? Lo! Abraham said: "My Sustainer is He who grants life and deals death." (The king) replied: "I (too) grant life and deal death!" Said Abraham: "Verily, God causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!" Thereupon he who was bent on denying the truth remained dumbfounded: for God does not guide people who (deliberately) do wrong. (2:258)

The verse also teaches people the way of using argumentation and legitimating language. When the king said "I (too) grant life and deal death!" the prophet did not refute the king's point but rather moved on to his next point, giving more examples of Allah's powers.

**Affiliation language.** The language of affiliation is the fourth kind of demonstration in the Qur'an and reflects how people belong to a certain group or community. The second surah, the longest in the Qur'an, provides an example of affiliation language. It states that there are three groups of people and demonstrates in detail their beliefs and actions. The first group is the believers, described as:

Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in what has been revealed to you, (O Mohammad), and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain (in faith)... (2:2-5)

The verses promote belief in unseen, or *al-Ghayb*, knowledge (as explained in Chapter four), prayer, giving to the needy, and belief in the Qur'an, all previous books revealed before the Qur'an, and the Day of Judgment. The second group is disbelievers, described as:

Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment. (2:6-7)

Disbelievers have made up their minds that they will not believe in anything but their own ideas, regardless of anyone's attempts to promulgate other ideas. The third group is hypocrites:

And of the people are some who say, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day," but they are not believers... And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers... And when it is said to them, "Believe as the people have believed," they say, "Should we believe as the foolish have believed?"... And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe;" but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say, "Indeed, we are with you; we were only mockers..." (2:8-14)

These verses explain the actions of hypocrites who pretend to be believers when they are in the presence of believing people but disparage believers when they are by themselves. These verses affiliate the actions and beliefs of three groups of people to help readers identify to which group other people and they themselves belong and to understand what their expected behavior is.

In conclusion, didactic methods in the Qur'an use the language demonstration to explain the Qur'an's teachings, with the purpose of instruction being to transform people's lives. The next section explores how the literature supports the above findings.

**Demonstration in the literature.** Muslims believe that language of the Qur'an is miraculous and that it is responsible for the transformation of society in the Arabian Peninsula. The choice and order of words in the Qur'an created a type of literature that was new to Arabs, using more eloquent language than what had come before. While non-believers accused the prophet of being insane, a sorcerer, a poet, or a soothsayer, as time passed more people converted to Islam because of its logic (Gibb, 1962). Khalifa (1982) wrote that scholars of Al-Azhar University explained the Qur'anic style is unmatched for

many reasons, one of them being its rhythmic style. “The rhythm of the syllables is more sustained than in prose and less patterned than in poetry” (p. 24). British orientalist and translator Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot (1985) stated, “Though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none has as yet succeeded” (p. 5).

Omran (1988) confirmed this point when he explained the value of the Arabic language to Arabs at the time of revelation. The oral culture and poetry played a major role in saving Arab’s early history due to their emphasis on the eloquence and coherent speech. The language of the Qur’an “Was revealed in the most eloquent, articulate and elaborate style that Arabic language has known” (Omran, 1988, para.17). Omran added that religious scholars considered revealing the Qur’an in Arabic language reflects the wisdom of God.

In his book *Towards Understanding Islam*, Abul A’la Mawdudi (1987) asserted the use of different forms of language in the Qur’an. He explained that the Qur’an presents guidance while at the same time explaining rewards and warnings. Mawdudi added that curriculum in the Qur’an made its teaching clear, as it “Embodied a framework for the conduct of the whole of human life” (p. 11).

As for the use of demonstration to encourage people to see the greatness of creation, Islamic scholar Sayyed Qutb (1960), in his Qur’anic commentary *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, attempted to evoke visual appreciation of the universe. He wrote:

This world is beautiful, inexhaustibly beautiful. Man may grasp and enjoy this beauty as much as he wishes... The element of beauty in this world is intentional. Perfection of creation results in achieving beauty... Look at the bee, the flower, the star, the night, the morning,

the shades, the clouds, this music pervading the entire universe of beauty and perfection. The Qur'an draws our attention to all this, so we may ponder and enjoy it ... (Vol. 5, p. 252)

This is to say that Allah asks people to look around, to think, and to learn why and how things are happening. By viewing the creation of everything this way, we can better comprehend the greatness of the Creator, Allah.

### **Conclusion**

Through my reading of the Qur'an I found two main points in regard to its curriculum. First, the Qur'an uses different teaching methods—such as command, repetition, storytelling, and demonstration—that are still used in schools today. Secondly, forms of language used by modern curricularists also exist as methods of teaching in the Qur'an. Pinar (2004) outlined six forms of language that are popular among curriculum writers: descriptive, explanatory, controlling, legitimating, perspective, and affiliation. The command teaching method represents the controlling form of language mentioned by Pinar. Storytelling uses the descriptive form of language, while demonstration uses explanatory, legitimating, and affiliation language. The Qur'an uses Pinar's perspective form of language in its requirement for critical thinking, as discussed in Chapter Four.

When the Qur'an's teaching methods and forms of language are viewed in the context of its three-pronged ideology (the oneness of Allah, that man has freedom of choice, and that each individual is responsible for his actions) and its purpose (to invoke change towards a better life for adherents) one may see the Qur'an as a rich and highly effective source of curriculum.

## Chapter Five - Conclusion

Despite my daily reading of the Qur'an, in the in-depth review of the Qur'an's curriculum for this dissertation I was stunned to find out that it has instructions for almost all aspects of our daily activities. Even in the small details of our lives, the Qur'an provides guidance on how to speak: "And lower thy voice: for, behold, the ugliest of all voices is that the (loud) voice of asses" (31:19); how to walk: "And flip not thy cheek off from people in (false) pride, and walk not haughtily on earth" (31:18); and how to communicate with each other:

O you who have attained to faith! Avoid most guesswork (about one another) for, behold, some of (such) guesswork is (in itself) a sin; and do not spy upon one another, and neither allow your-selves to speak ill of one another behind your backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would loathe it! And be conscious of God. Verily, God is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace! (49:12)

Even in regard to our drinking and eating habits, the Qur'an says, "O Children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for each act of worship, and eat and drink (freely); however, don't waste: verily, He doesn't love the wasteful!" (7:31).

To make the most of the Qur'an's instructions and fully understand the work as a whole, one must read it chronologically, as some verses supersede others. Most scholars believe that religious works must be interpreted within the context and the era of when they were written (Barlas, 2002, p. 2). Readers may take one verse or sometimes a part of a verse out of context and produce their own judgments that misrepresent the work's intended meaning. An example of this is when people use only a part of the verse about intoxication: "O you who have believed, don't approach prayer when you are intoxicated" (4:43). Some would use part of the verse as permitting alcohol consumption while

ignoring the rest of the verse and subsequent verses that prohibit all types of intoxication. The appropriate way to interpret any verse in the Qur'an is to read all verses related to a certain topic and to study it chronologically along with the historical context of each verse.

All texts are open to variant readings, and, as explained earlier, this applies to the Qur'an, "Which has been ripped from its historical, literary, linguistic and psychological context and then been continually re-contextualized in various cultures and according to the ideological needs of various actors" (Arkoun, 1994, p. 5). Different interpretation does not mean that there are different books of the Qur'an; there is one Arabic Qur'an with different translations and interpretations. Additionally, sometimes people do not differentiate between the verses of the Qur'an and cultural practices when studying the Qur'an. As a result, the Qur'an is confused with Muslims' practices that "Have a history of using Islam for their own political ends" (Barlas, 2002, p. 5). To understand the Qur'an, or any text, one must understand its historical context.

While reviewing the Qur'an and the major philosophies in the United States, curriculum in the Qur'an seems to match the fundamentals of the holistic approach most closely. This is because the holistic approach and the Qur'an's curriculum place great value on human beings and respect the needs of all types of learners. Both prepare learners to be successful citizens who will care about each other, their families, society in general, and the environment. Educational curriculum in the Qur'an prepares and nurtures students holistically in terms of psychological, physical, and spiritual growth

while at the same time connecting students to the world around them, as explained in Chapter Four.

The Qur'an is not merely a book of commandments; it addresses a broad array of topics. In addition to its religious and moral regulations, it addresses philosophical, scientific, and social concepts. In addressing these topics, the Qur'an uses different methods of instruction, among them command, repetition, parable, storytelling, and demonstration, as well as various forms of language—descriptive, explanatory, legitimating, and affiliation. The Qur'an uses these didactic methods and forms of language to teach people the history of the prophets and ancient peoples while connecting the past with the present. It teaches values and how Allah wants people to live. It also explains the struggle between good and evil and the consequences of different actions while underscoring the concept of freedom of choice. The Qur'an is based upon educating people about how to think and be responsible for their actions, making it clear that each human is responsible for his choices: “This Day (Day of Judgment) every soul will be recompensed for what it earned. No injustice today! Indeed, Allah is swift in account” (40:17). In this way the Qur'an's educational curriculum coincides with Bobbitt's definition of curriculum, in which he explains that administrators cannot decide the future of students.

I conclude that curriculum in the Qur'an may be described as containing the following major components:

First, curriculum in the Qur'an cares for each individual as a whole person. Developing one's personality is a major aspect of the holistic approach in the Qur'an, as



it connects each individual first with himself, then with society and his surroundings. It informs people that Allah created everything in the world for humans to enjoy (40:79), and in return people must take care of the world because humans are the vicegerent of Allah on earth: “And (mention, O Mohammad), when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority’” (2:30).

Secondly, curriculum in the Qur’an invites humans to engage actively in a process of questioning and reasoning and advises them not to accept anything passively. The Qur’an asks its readers in many verses to question, investigate, seek proof, and present their own ideas.

Thirdly, curriculum in the Qur’an directs humans to seek knowledge, making it a requirement for all people. Humans are also to keep in mind that their quest for knowledge should be directed towards pleasing Allah.

Fourthly and finally, the different methods of instruction and forms of language used in the Qur’an indicate that teachers should utilize varying didactic methods to fit their students’ needs.

Studying aspects of curriculum in the Qur’an caused me to look closer at the curriculum in U.S. schools today and develop two recommendations. First, I believe that education should be more concerned with allowing students to learn about themselves, giving them the confidence to make decisions and use their own judgment. School is not always a happy experience for students, perhaps because schools do not promote students’ need to explore, express their ideas, and question their surroundings. Instead we teach students to sit behind their desks, listen to the teacher, and follow orders. We also

teach them that the correct answers are those found in the textbooks. Memorization is an essential part of our teaching. I believe that spreading knowledge and understanding and applying this knowledge while supporting critical thinking skills should be among our fundamental teaching principles. In short, we need to rethink our teaching methods.

My second recommendation is that we rethink not simply how we teach only but also what we teach. I believe that schools should teach more history and philosophy to help students learn more about themselves and others. Learning about other cultures in a melting pot like the United States is essential, and cultural awareness should go beyond food. Many of us love kabobs, falafel, and pizza, but what else do we know about each other? By learning philosophy students would spend more time asking why and how. By learning more history, we will stop viewing China, for example, as our future economic agent; China is one of the world's great civilizations, about which most of us learn very little. More emphasis on history also may enable us to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Finally, we live in a pluralistic, globalized society whose people adhere to an array of religious beliefs; therefore, it is beneficial for global citizens to know at least the fundamentals of the world's religions.

Ignorance is our jail, and the least we can do is to seek knowledge to free ourselves. The exhortations to seek knowledge and be accountable for our actions while embracing freedom of choice are among the main principles of the Qur'an's curriculum. I believe that applying those same principles to the educational system in the United States would produce better teachers, better students, and better citizens.

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