

Teacher Development Concept Paper in the Madaris of the KSIMC Globally.

By Sayyid Aliraza Naqvi (12/12/12)

The Holy Prophet [s] said: "Verily, what will continue to reach a believer, after his death, from amongst his actions and good deeds are: the knowledge which he taught and spread, the righteous child whom he left behind, and the Holy script which he delivered as heritage (transcribed, and made available)."

Sunan-i-Ibn-Majeh, vol. 1, p. 88

Imam Hassan [a] said: "Teach your knowledge to others and (try to) learn yourself the knowledge of others."

Bihar-Al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 111

Years of research support the premise that three key processes MUST be aligned to improve academic achievement: and this was clearly identified at the Madrasah Retreat in Dubai.

- Content/curriculum
- Assessment/Evaluation
- Instruction/teacher training

Our community, in general including individuals, have made unimaginable effort on the alignment of the first component—content/curriculum. And they have done an immense service of delivering the most robust content, based on the values of Ahlul Bait AS.

Assessment/Evaluation never existed.

We ASSUMED that teachers knew which instructional strategies made the most difference in student learning of the standards.

We ASSUMED that teachers knew how to deliver those effective instructional strategies in the classroom so that all children could succeed.

Was the Assumption correct?

New studies hammer the impact of this assumption home. Wenglinsky (2002) in “The Effect of Classroom Practice on Student Achievement” notes that the most powerful predictor of student achievement was the teacher’s knowledge and skills in effective instruction

Building the capacity in our teachers to improve academic achievement through effective instruction is the most powerful investment we can make in our Madaris

If we can create a safe journey for teachers as they transition to a new way of teaching and learning, we can impact on the academic achievement for ALL students...with enough power to override the impact on spirituality.

Pedagogical Research

Educational research and proposals have focused, in recent decades, on new learner-centred approaches to education. These new approaches have taken over from the conventional model in which learners are often considered as the passive receptors of knowledge to which they have not contributed. On the contrary, one acquires knowledge not just by receiving it, but also by actually constructing it. Knowledge is built up within a network of interactions with others (teacher, schoolmates, family, society, etc.). The teacher here is seen as a guide, a person who accompanies the learning process, rather than an authority imposing codified knowledge that the learner must simply assimilate or absorb.

Teaching and training is something we all experience from the start. As babies our first teachers were our parents, brothers and sisters. As we grew we got to know many people who filled that role in our life. Our Madrasah teachers have played and are playing an important role in our spiritual and ideological growth. Some have been and are more influential than others. Some taught us just one thing but that has stayed with us all our lives. Teachers are all around us and certain dedicated individuals see this as a service to Allah SWT, however we are not all equipped to teach, and some of us do it regardless of the outcomes and the culture is more content based and little or no attention to the skills of teaching coupled with spirituality.

A good teacher needs to be many things, firstly and most importantly be spiritual from within, as Quran says *lima taquloona ma la tafaluun* (61.2 As saff) Why do you preach that which you yourself do not do? There are several Hadith stating that at times action speak louder than words. The action of the teacher will be detrimental as he/she is the role model. The teacher must be organized and able

to keep time excellently, they need compassion, dedication, a genuine love of and a thorough knowledge of their subject, be it Fiqh, Akhlaq, Tarikh, Quran or Spirituality. Teachers need these qualities and they must also be: an effective communicator, responsive, innovative, creative, and inclusive in their approach. However, there is one quality without which teachers really find it hard to do their best job: that quality is enthusiasm. The question here we need to ask ourselves is, do all teachers in our Madaris have all of these qualities when they start? Maybe developing while on the job may be the answer we are looking for. What then do teachers need to be aware of?

They need to know about:

- Learners and their individual barriers to communication
- When learners are lacking in motivation
- The dangers of making assumptions about learners
- Caring too much or too little, which impedes learning
- Knowing when to say no
- Knowing and understanding the issues of a challenging learner
- Managing learning and development rather than controlling learners.

It is no wonder that good teachers are well regarded by our community and are so in demand. Teaching is fulfilling and it is satisfying- helping your fellow human beings, being called the helpers of Imam Zamana A

The Role Of The Teacher In The Madaris

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: "A person shall arrive on the Day of Judgment and shall be in possession of good deeds in the measure of vastly accumulated clouds or towering mountains. (Witnessing them) he shall ask: O' My Lord! How can these be for me when I have not performed them? God shall reply: This is your knowledge that you had taught and conveyed to the people, and which was acted upon after you had died." Basaair al-Darajaat, vol. 5, pg. 16; Bihaar al-Anwaar, vol. 2 ,pg. 18.

Imam A'li (A.S.) said: "If a speech emanates from the heart (with sincerity), it shall enter into the heart (and be effective), but if it emanates from the tongue, it shall not go beyond the ears." Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 20, pg. 287.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: "Do not call people (towards guidance and goodness) by means of your tongues! (Rather), call them by means of your (good)

deeds. Bihaar al-Anwaar, vol. 5, pg. 198.

Imam Ali (A.S.) said: 'One who proclaims himself to lead others should start by teaching himself before he teaches others. He should teach through his character before using his tongue to teach. One who is able to teach and discipline oneself is more worthy of esteem than one who teaches and disciplines others.' Nahjul Balaqah: Saying 73

'He who wishes to talk well must first think well.'

Anon

'Fantastic things happen – to the way we feel, to the way we make other people feel. All this is simply by using positive words.'

Professor Leo Buscaglia (1924–1998) teacher, writer and humanitarian

What do learners expect from the teacher who is leading the group? What makes a good teacher? Who have been the influential teachers in your life? How would a teacher differentiate between *Taliim* and *Tarbiyat*? Content and Process? Is the teacher?

- Enthusiastic
- Has organised the session well
- Has a feeling for the subject
- Can form an idea of the topic
- Has empathy with the learners
- Understands how people learn
- Has skills in teaching and managing learning
- Is alert to context and 'classroom' events
- Is teaching with their preferred teaching style
- Is a facilitator
- Has planned the lesson (lesson plan)

I believe that the criteria set above are essential, if the teacher is not motivated and is not enthusiastic, it will show in the teachers performance. Learners will not be motivated unless the teachers are themselves motivated. A teacher must demonstrate that the session is well organised, this will enable them to keep the learner focused and give them the confidence that they are learning from a professional. It will also give the teacher the opportunity to form an idea of the topic at hand.

It is critical that the teacher shows empathy with the learners. The learners need to be able to feel that they can relate to the teacher and are on the same wavelength. Each learner is different from another. It is therefore essential that that teacher understands how people learn, and that there are different learning styles. If the teacher is aware of this, it will give the teacher skills in managing the learning of the student. If the learner feels at any time that the teacher does not have the necessary skill to teach, it may cause the learner to shut down and not learn.

There is in my opinion a big difference between teaching and facilitating. Teaching is to instruct, enlighten and discipline as opposed to helping and enabling, the goal of which is to support others to achieve exceptional performance. The combination of both these strengths can lead in teaching excellence.

A lesson plan gives structure to the lesson and the aims and objectives are met, assessment and evaluation are also important.

In a document produced for the Department of Education and Employment (2001) entitled 'initial assessment of learning and support needs and planning to meet needs' it mentions the role played by initial assessment as;

' All learners should undergo a period of initial assessment, the purpose of which is to identify their learning and support needs. The identification of learner's learning and support needs is crucial as it presents the first stage in the learning cycle and on which all other stages depend.'

To be truly engaged in the teaching role there must also be a willingness to reflect deeply regarding one's professional practice, one that allows for professional and personal growth. Deconstructing aspects of one's teaching and reflecting on their relevance to the educative process allows for differentiation to

become an integral factor within the teaching and learning encounter. Silcock (1994) mentions that;

‘The reflective process takes two forms, the first access non-logical procedural knowledge used in ongoing practice. In this case, the reflection is ‘in the action’ and only truly manifest in the phenomenology of the practice itself. Whilst in the second case details of the practitioner practice become the focus, thereby allowing them to modify and broaden application beyond immediate circumstances.’

Taking the above into consideration the opening up of a variety of possibilities within the learning environment can only fully be actualized if the teacher is willing and able to address their individual practice at a critical level.

One of the many responsibilities of the teacher is to work to create an educational space, which brings about an inclusive learning experience. It is a fact that learners do not reflect in their personal biographies when they enter the learning environment. Personal biographies inform a learner’s perspective of themselves and also the social environment within which they engage with others.

Hooks (1994) mentions that;

‘Most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal.’

Hooks is speaking of the need to bring to the practice of teaching a commitment to differentiation, which ultimately leads to an embracing of difference and a tailoring of resources and activities which focus on developing a learner’s weaknesses and enhancing their individual strengths. What also manifests itself as a responsibility of the teaching role is for the teacher to create an arena where critical dialogue is addressed. In the traditional non critical arenas which Freire (1993) terms the ‘banking system of education’ power differentials are essential elements of the teaching and learning process, this process is reflective of the wider social condition which is one where oppression in various forms is the norm. Freire (1993) further mentions that in this process of addressing power

differentials within the teaching and learning environment a transformation takes place. He states;

‘Through dialogue.’ the teacher of the students and the students cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher- student with students- teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for the process in which all grow. In this process arguments based on “authority” are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it.’

The key is the relationship between student and teacher. In this approach to education the teacher-student teaches the student teachers. This indeed recognises a truth; it is never the case in fact that the teacher always knows and the student never does. Problem-posing education is an approach to education where teacher and student approach a problem together. Student teacher and teacher-students work together to solve the problem. In my system of education we get what Freire (1993) calls ‘banking education’

In banking education the teacher 'knows', because he or she has received the officially sanctioned curriculum knowledge, which is then imparted to the students. The teacher becomes the deliverer of educational packages to the students. This way the student in modern education is excluded from participation in the getting of knowledge first-hand and as it relates to them. It is someone else's ‘knowledge’, which they are being given about objects that also belong to others. Students are excluded from inquiry and are in Freire's words "filed away".

Identify the potential learning needs of learners and the potential points of referral for the learners.

We need to understand the way people learn so that we can pass on knowledge, talim, spirituality, tarbiyat, and skills in a suitable way for everyone. We must also know what learners expect to get from this training or teaching, we should be aware of any special requirements that the learners have, and anything essential that stands in the way of learning for which we may need special support.

We all understand information in different ways. According to current research, these ways of learning, or learning styles as they have come to be known, can be divided into three main types.

- Visual (through the eyes- seeing and reading)
- Auditory (through the ears-listening)
- Kinaesthetic (learning by doing- touching and doing)

Visual auditory kinaesthetic VAK learning styles.

According to the VAK model, most people have a favoured learning style, although, in practice, we usually use a mixture of all three. We can find out which is favoured by each individual by a simple testing based on people's history and experiences. We can present things to suit peoples preferred learning styles, but usually with a group a combination of all three styles works well.

Equality And Diversity

What is Equality and Diversity?

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably, specific to their needs, including areas of race, gender, disability and the list has the potential of growing according to individual Madaris and circumstances.

Promoting equality should remove discrimination in all of the aforementioned areas. Bullying, harassment or victimisation are also considered as equality and diversity issues.

Diversity aims to recognise, respect and value people's differences to contribute and realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all staff and students.

Diversity allows for the valuing of cultural, class, and gender differences within the Madrasah environment. Producing a richer and more productive learning environment where all learners feel valued and are relevant to the teaching and learning experience. The incorporation of a commitment to diversity within the Madaris of our times is essential especially with different views that have mushroomed in our communities. All learners' cultures are made welcome.

Rather than being a barrier to learning, learners are made to feel that the individual and unique experiences which their cultures give them allows for an enrichment of the teaching and learning environment.

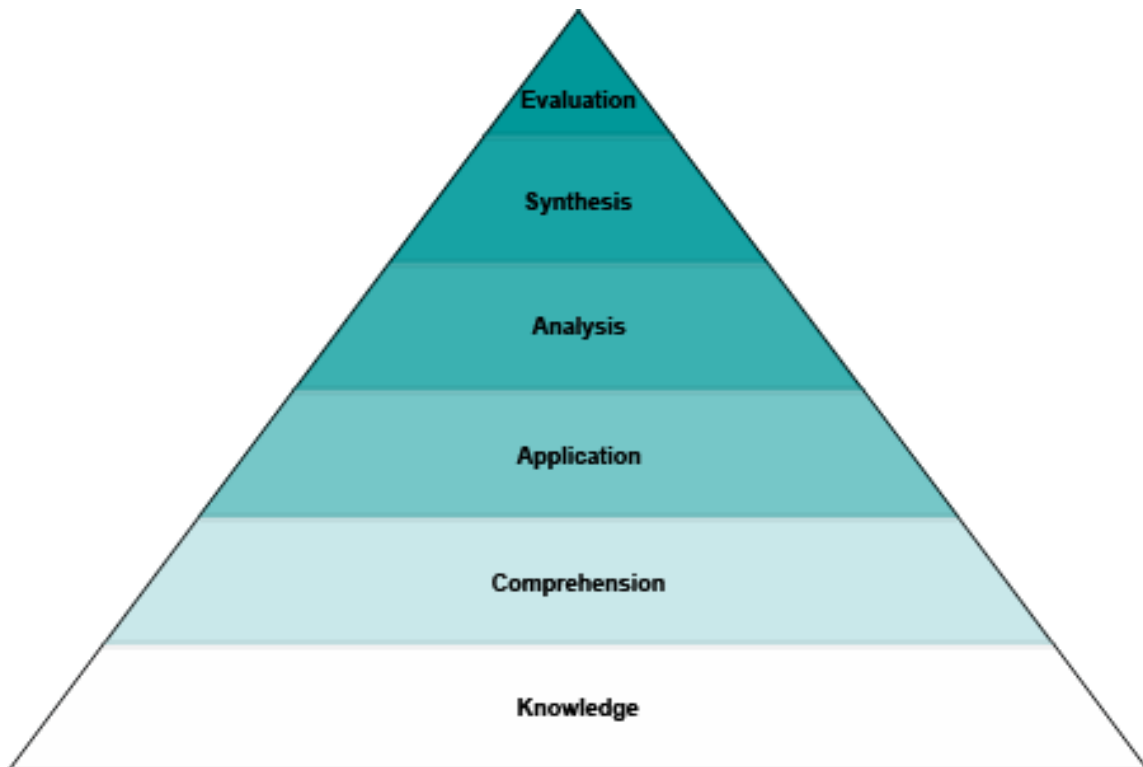
Teaching and learning approaches

We tend to learn things when we need to. Interest in the material to be learned be it Fiqh, Tarikh, Aqaed, or Quran is the best stimulus to learning. With no interest, the learner will simply go to the Madrasah because the parents want him/her to go. Once the child is enrolled in the Madrasah how does the interest keep up? In 1956, B.S. Bloom developed his theory about the way we learn, much of it is still applicable today. Bloom disagreed that education was about mere fact transfer, it is about mastery. When a learner has mastered a skill or some knowledge, then we can consider our job done. Learners acquire knowledge in three different ways, they want knowledge, skills and to understand what they are doing.

The stages of truly mastering something are:

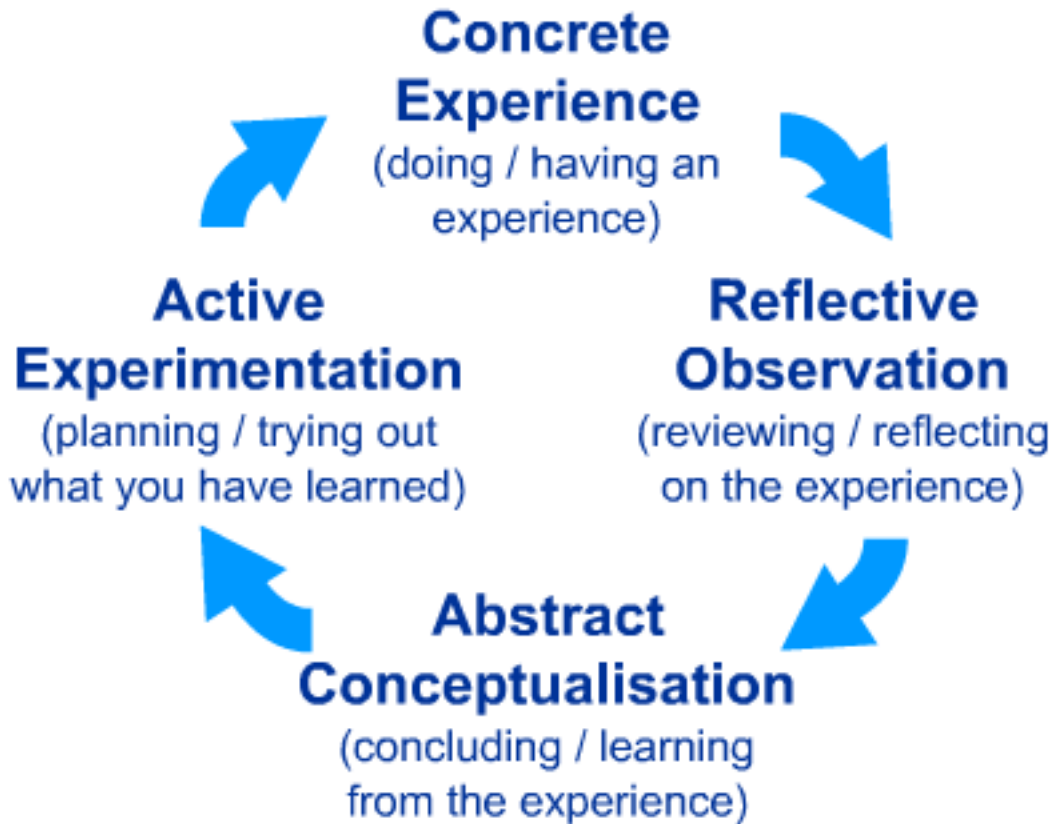
- When learners recognise it.
- When learners can show they understand it.
- When learners are able to apply their knowledge to real life situation.
- When learners are able to use the new information to analyse a real life situation.

A child can be taught about Wilaya, how will he cultivate the love of Wilaya? Below is the pyramid of Blooms Taxonomy, The bottom two lines of the pyramid is termed as Lower Order Thinking Skills, where only transfer of Knowledge is achieved. The rest of the lines going higher and finally reaching the top of the Pyramid is termed as Higher Order Thinking Skills, where the application of the Knowledge is achieved. There is a clear indication here of *Talim and Tarbiyat*.



Bloom's Taxonomy of learning. Adapted from: Bloom, B.S. (Ed.) (1956)
Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals.
Handbook I, cognitive domain. New York ; Toronto: Longmans, Green.

We also need to explore Kolbs learning cycle, which is also known as experiential learning. From conceptualisation to reflection of the knowledge.



A Reflective Teacher

Reflection is about estimating your own performance. The idea that we can learn from what we do is something that is very basic in teaching or training. Teachers usually keep a diary where they log the learner's performance and make notes about things such as:

- What went well?
- What did the learners find difficult and what tactics did I use?
- Were all the learners successful?
- If not, which learners were not and how might I reach them next time?
- How did the group respond to different activities?
- What styles of presenting information were particularly effective?
- What things went badly?

- How could I improve what I did this time to make it even more effective next time?
- What materials were particularly helpful and what did not work?
- Why was this?
- Did the lesson start and finish on time?
- If I taught the lesson again what would I do that was different?
- How long did you talk for and did you allow enough time for the learners to feedback?
- How good was the interaction with the learners and how do you know that?
- Did you speak to all learners equally or did you have particular favourites?
- Did one or two learners try to grab the spotlight?

It is good to discuss feelings with a supportive colleague; ideas may emerge as a result. Reflection is a circular process of course. As soon as some change has occurred reflection on the process will start again. This is what professional development is all about.

Assessment and Evaluation

Principles and Practices Of Assessment

There can be several principles of assessment however there are others which may be used repeatedly. Every teacher can set their own principles based on research and use what works best for them. Principles should be flexible and there should be several ways of implementing the principles, also where there is a set of principles there should be minimal overlap across them, as far as possible they should be defined independently.

Principles should be:

1.Valid: is the assessment fit for purpose? Is it needed? Does it assess what its supposed to assess? Does it measure what the individual is supposed to do or learn? Does it meet the criteria, goal and standard of the assessment? For example some view the traditional written exams as invalid as it does not give feedback to students and about the details of their performance.

2. Fair: is the assessment fair? Is it a level playing field for all? This principle is very important, as the validity of any assessment would depend on fairness.

3. Reliable: any assessment must be reliable, it must have been tried and tested several times before and it would be safe to replicate it in other assessments.

Purposes of Assessment

Initial assessment: This gives the opportunity to assess the individual learners needs, abilities, aptitudes, preferences, and prior learning in order to plan and provide an appropriate learning programme. This can be done in many ways, for example interviews, icebreakers, knowing learner profile etc.

Formative assessment: Formative assessment is often done at the beginning or during a programme, thus providing the opportunity for immediate evidence for student learning in a particular course or at a particular point in a programme. Formative assessment data can be used to monitor the progress towards achieving learning outcomes. Classroom assessment is one of the most common formative assessment techniques. The purpose of this technique is to improve quality of student learning and should not be evaluative or involve grading students. This can also lead to curricular modifications when specific courses have not met the student learning outcomes. Classroom assessment can also provide important programme information when multiple sections of a course are taught because it enables programmes to examine if the learning goals and objectives are met in all sections of the course. It also can improve instructional quality by engaging the faculty in the design and practice of the course goals and objectives and the course impact on the programme.

This form of assessment also goes on all the time, its purpose is to provide feedback on what students are learning, to the student it is to identify achievements and areas for further work, to the teacher it is to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching to date and to focus on future plans with setting targets for the learner. This form of assessment is developmental and gives the learner an opportunity to grow and develop in his/her learning journey.

Summative assessment: Summative assessment is comprehensive in nature, provides accountability and is used to check the level of learning at the end of the programme. Summative assessment is about determining the level of attainment reached by a student. It has an 'after the teaching' sense to it. For example, if upon completion of a programme students will have the knowledge to pass an accreditation test, taking the test would be summative in nature since it is based on the cumulative learning experience. Programme goals and objectives often reflect the cumulative nature of the learning that takes place in a programme. Thus the programme would conduct summative assessment at the end of the programme to ensure students have met the programme goals and objectives. Attention should be given to using various methods and measures in order to have a comprehensive plan. Ultimately, the foundation for an assessment plan is to collect summative assessment data and this type of data can stand-alone.

This form of assessment is what students tend to focus on. It is an assessment on completion of a course or module, which says whether or not you have passed, and a grade is given, however a summative assessment can also be formative, if the feedback offered is sufficient.

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