



Relevance of Utilizing Problem Based Learning in Teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic Studies

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Abstract

This paper explores relevance of Problem Based Learning in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies. The background upon which the paper was built was presented and scholarly/authoritative definitions of Problem Based Learning; models of Problem Based Learning; similarities and differences between the three models; characteristics of Problem Based Learning; strengths and weaknesses of Problem Based Learning; relevance of using Problem Based Learning in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies and classroom application of Problem Based Learning in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies curriculum were presented. Subsequently, It was concluded that Problem based Learning is quiet relevant in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies must especially 'fiqh'(Islamic jurisprudence) aspect of the subject and if effectively implemented, Problem Based Learning will help our youth develop critical thinking ability which in turn able them to be solving real life problems that we are facing in our communities. Lastly, it was suggested among others that Islamic studies teachers should be employing Problem Based Learning in order to help our youth acquire critical thinking ability; well qualified and professional teachers should be employed so as to be able to be employing the Problem Based Learning strategy in teaching.

Keywords: Relevance, Problem Based Learning, teaching, Senior Secondary School, Islamic studies.

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) has categorically indicated that one of the objectives of Post Basic Education and Career Education (PBECE) is to raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can *think independently and rationally*, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour. Equally, the policy states that educational activities shall be *learner centred for maximum self-development and self-fulfilment*. The importance of teaching and learning religious education generally and Islamic studies particularly in our secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. Islamic studies is one of the subjects taught in our formal institutions of learning right from Nursery/Primary through Secondary schools up to University levels. The current Secondary School Islamic studies curriculum is thematic in nature which comprises: (a)-Qur'an and Hadith. (b)-Tauhid and Figh. (c)-Sirah and Tahdhib. The Secondary school Islamic studies curriculum is timed for three years: SSS 1, SSS II, SSS III respectively, and the curriculum are arranged in three terms of each year. The overall aims and objectives of teaching the subject as presumed by the curriculum is to produce a disciplined person. Going by literature and personal experience as a serving Islamic studies teacher, Islamic studies at secondary level has a lot of problems among which are: lack of qualified teachers to

effectively teach the subject; lack of instructional materials to facilitate learning; lack of conducive environment for safety and smooth learning; lack of good pay and incentives to motivate the teachers; lack of using learner centred methods to enable students actively participate and have control of their learning, Lack of effective classroom evaluation techniques to assess cognitive, affective and psychomotive domains, e.t.c. Empirical researches have shown that the success or otherwise of implementing curriculum of any subject significantly hinges on the ability of its teachers to use the most appropriate teaching methods to effectively teach within the stipulated time. It is observed that the danger inherent in frequent use of teacher centred methods and or inability to adopt the most appropriate teaching methods most especially in religious studies may lead to indoctrination and misconception of the whole issues which if care is not taken it may lead to religious extremism. Literature and personal experience indicate that Secondary school Islamic studies teachers predominantly employ teacher centred methods such as lecture method, demonstration method, story-telling method, etc to teach and this is contrary to the proclamation of the NPE (2014) which states that educational activities shall be learner centred for maximum self-development and self-fulfilment. Similarly, empirical researches unveiled

that Islamic studies teachers find it difficult to use learner centred methods during classroom instructional delivery such as discussion method, inquiry method, discovery method, students' presentation method, problem solving method, problem based learning strategy e.t.c.; to interactively teach. Definitely, this made the Islamic studies students develop somehow a negative attitude towards learning the subject because they were made to be passive listeners, inactive and somehow dull. Globally, the winds of change are blowing through education. There is urgent and constant agitation and call for paradigm shift from teacher centred methods to learner centred methods whereby learners can actively participate and have control of their learning process which will eventually made them develop interest and have positive attitude towards learning any subject, Islamic studies inclusive. Therefore, due to advancement in the world of 21st century, really there is need for paradigm shift to be using other teaching methods that are learner centred such as Problem Based Learning (PBL) strategy. In this technological advanced world, there is urgent need for promoting critical thinking among Secondary school students. Problem Based Learning (PBL), is typically learner centred teaching strategy which uses complex, real world issues as a classroom subject matter whereby "problem" is triggered and or assigned to students subsequently, they do independently "Self Directed Learning", before returning to the group to discuss and refine the knowledge they acquired. It is quite interesting to know that the Holy Qur'an in numerous places has call on mankind, Secondary school Islamic studies students inclusive to use critical thinking to establish facts to solve problems. Equally, as earlier indicated, one of the aims and objectives of Secondary education as embedded in the NPE (2014) is to raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally. At this juncture therefore, both the Holy Qur'an and the NPE (2014) are on the same page impolitely urging school teachers to be employing Problem Based Learning strategy to teach. Definitely, based on this, there is urgent need for promoting critical thinking among secondary school students generally and Islamic studies students in particular. Fiqh is an Islamic jurisprudence and it is the third source of Islamic law which is directly deduced from Qur'an and Hadith and it requires critical thinking in applying the role or law in Islam. "Fiqh and Hadith" are the second theme in the official Secondary school curriculum developed by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013). Fiqh teaches and encompasses concepts, topics, issues and problems that directly touches and guides Muslims day to day real life. Therefore, Fiqh is all about problem solving

as such it requires critical thinking as such problem based learning is inevitable in teaching Islamic studies generally and fiqh specifically.

Conceptual Framework:

Problem Based Learning, (PBL).

Wikipedia (2021) describes Problem Based Learning as a learner-centered pedagogy where learner learns through triggering an upon-ended problem which allows learner to acquire knowledge, enhance group collaboration, communication and develop other skills and attributes. Honest (2017) opines that Problem Based Learning is a student-centered and problem stimulated approach that can be used in curriculum development and learning process to emphasize the importance of problem solving skills and derive the ability to do self-learning. Problem Based Learning is also seen as instructional student-centered approach that allows students to conduct research and incorporate theory into practice. It also involves knowledge application and skills development to solve real life problems (Savery, 2015). Hanefar, Hussain & Javis (2021) put that Problem Based Learning is a project which is well planned to allow for genuine problem solving in collaborative environment where teachers should reconceptualize themselves as facilitators of learning, monitor students' progress and guide them towards meaningful solutions.

Models of Problem Based Learning (PBL)

According to Servant-Miklos (2020) indicates that, going by the literature, Problem Based Learning has three models/variants. These are: The Canadian-McMaster model, the Dutch-Maastricht model and the Danish Approach.

The Canadian-McMaster Model

The Canadian-McMaster model was the first Problem Based Learning model launched at the Faculty of medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 1969. As earlier indicated, the model was conceived as a result of medical students' deficiencies of in ability to translate what was taught in class into real world life work. According to McMaster University (2021), Problem Based Learning tutorial process has the following steps:

Steps 1- Identifying the problem

Steps 2- Exploring pre-existing knowledge

Steps 3- Generating hypotheses and possible mechanism

Steps 4- Identifying learning issues and objectives

Steps 5- Self-study and research based on the above

Steps 6- Re-evaluation and application of new knowledge to the problem

Steps 7- Assessment and reflection on learning

The Dutch-Maastricht Model

The Dutch-Maastricht Problem Based Learning model was the second model launched immediately after the McMaster model in 1974. The model is recognized with 7-jump steps that you follow in groups of 10 to 15 students (Maastricht University, 2022).

These steps are:

1. Step 1- Discuss the case and make sure everyone understands the problem.
2. Step 2- Identify the questions that need to be answered to shed light on the case.
3. Step 3- Brainstorm what the group already knows and identify potential solutions.
4. Step 4- Analyze and structure the results of the brainstorming session.
5. Step 5- Formulate learning objectives for the knowledge that is still lacking.
6. Step 6- Do independent study, individually or in smaller groups: read articles or books, follow practicals or attend lectures to gain the required knowledge.
7. Step 7- Discuss the finding.

The Danish Approach.

The Danish approach otherwise known as Aalborg Problem Based learning (PBL) model was launched since when the university was established in 1974. The Danish or Aalborg model was specific since it was the first Problem Based Learning application in engineering education. Since then, Problem Based Learning was adopted throughout the University. In Aalborg model, the teaching is presented in two ways: course teaching and project teaching. Equally, the approach is a combination of problem based and a project oriented approach (Aalborg University, 2021). The approach has the following steps:

Steps 1- Analysis of the problem

Steps 2- Problem solving

Steps 3- Project Report

Characteristics of Problem Based Learning

Thomas (2000) indicates that Problem Based Learning focuses on learning that involves students in investigations, problem solving, and other meaningful task activities, gives students the opportunity to work autonomously in constructing their own knowledge, and reaches the peak to produce real products. Given that each student has a different learning style, then the PBL provides an opportunity for students to explore the content (material) using a variety of ways that are meaningful to them and conducted experiments collaboratively. PBL is an in-depth investigation on a topic of the real world; it would be valuable for the attention and effort of students.

PBL is a comprehensive study involving students in collaborative investigation. PBL creates multidisciplinary approach to learning.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Problem Based learning

Sumarni (2015) presents that Problem Based Learning increases students' learning motivation, academic achievements, cooperation and collaboration ability, creativity, attitude towards learning, ability to communicate, skills in managing learning resources (improving library research skills), lowers students' anxiety, creates fun learning, increases problem solving ability. By the other side, Sumarni (2015) maintains that Problem Based Learning requires a lot of time to solve complex problem and time is very scarce in our schools; it adds more cost to both parents and schools; it limits teacher's autonomy in teaching; applying project based learning is quite intimidating for both experienced and new teachers; it requires more resources like electricity, materials, apparatus, machines etc.; students who weak in experiment, collection of information, collaboration, association will have trouble and difficulty in negotiation and compromise; students cannot understand the entire topic(s), when topic(s) given to each group are different; and lack of students interest in the subject, including methods of teaching.

Relevance of using Problem Based Learning in Teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic Studies:

As earlier indicated, Islamic studies is taught in our Senior Secondary schools. Fiqh is an Islamic jurisprudence and it is the third source of Islamic law which is directly deduced from Qur'an and Hadith and it requires critical thinking in applying the role or law in Islam. "Fiqh and Hadith" are the second theme in the official Secondary school curriculum developed by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013). Fiqh teaches and encompasses concepts, topics, issues and problems that directly touches and guides Muslims day to day real life. Therefore, Fiqh is all about problem solving as such it requires critical thinking. The aims and objectives of teaching "Fiqh" as a theme is to enable the recipients of Secondary school education to be able to be solving the day to day real life problems associated with their religion and social life. Going by literature and personal experience as a practicing Islamic studies teacher, it is therefore believed that Problem Based Learning (PBL) will be the most appropriate teaching strategy for promoting critical thinking and to teach Fiqh to secondary school students because Fiqh is all about problem solving which requires critical thinking in solving real life problems. The aims and objectives of teaching "Fiqh" as a theme is to enable the recipients of Secondary school education to be able to be solving the day to day real life problems associated with their religion and social life. Going by literature and personal experience as a

practicing Islamic studies teacher, it is therefore believed that Problem Based Learning (PBL) will be the most appropriate teaching strategy for promoting critical thinking and to teach Fiqh to secondary school students because Fiqh is all about problem solving which requires critical thinking in solving real life problems.

Based on the above, and on order to respond to the call of the Holy Qur'an and the NPE (2014), it is strongly observed and argued that Problem Based Learning (PBL) strategy is the one that encourages students to develop critical thinking so as to acquire problem solving skills and learn concepts instead of just absorbing facts. To be more precise and effectively to teach the concept of Salat (Prayer), Sawm (Fasting), Zakkat (Alms-giving), the rite of Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage), Shari'ah (Islamic law) Jihad (Islamic struggle), e.t.c., Problem Based Learning (PBL) strategy will be the most appropriate teaching strategy to pilot the students to achieve the desired goals. This is because Problem Based Learning (PBL) strategy is provocative in nature and facilitates the transfer of information into knowledge by developing higher-order thinking skills, including the ability to analyse, identify similarities and differences between things and assimilate knowledge with the ultimate aim of understanding the reasons behind Islamic worship, legislation and legal provisions which have direct impact on day to day Muslim real life.

Classroom Application of Problem Based Learning in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic Studies:

In implementing Problem Based Learning in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies students, teacher can for instance, present a critical thinking provoking scenario/situation/case/question that need answer which has a direct bearing on real life situation. Equally, video clip can be presented/played consisting some cases or situations where students have to employ high critical thinking to come to a certain answer or conclusion. For example, teacher can present or play a video depicting the ugly, terrible and bad economic situation the Nigerians found themselves and ask the student to proper solutions to the problem. Teacher

Problem Based Learning can be used during real classroom situation, when giving assignment, presentation and also can utilised as group project. The most important role of a teacher in Problem Based Learning is guiding the students to reach conclusion. Here, teacher will then guide the students towards the idea of 'Zakkat' as a divine way and the most effective and efficient way of eradicating poverty and unemployment among the citizenry. Moreover, ugly incident of kidnapping, armed robbery, religious extremism, etc., can also be adequately curbed by effective and efficient implementation of Islamic zakat system. Nigeria as a country is facing a serious problem of unwanted pregnancy, rape, sodomy, and other forms of sexual harassments among our teenage girls and boys. If effective implemented, teacher will

guide students through Problem Based Learning to derive at an amicable conclusion that avoidance of ‘Zina’ and ‘Luwad’ (fornication and sodomy), can put a total and everlasting stop to these social problems. It is quiet paradoxical to think of Islam or tag it as unpeaceful religion, whereas the word ‘Islam’ means peace. Islam teaches peace and is all about peace as such it promotes unity, true brotherhood and peaceful coexistence within and between different beliefs. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) lives with non-Muslim, interacts with them both in Mecca and Medina without harassing or intimidating them. As Muslims, we strongly copy from him and we confine our lives to his dictate. If successfully implemented, Problem Based Learning can be utilised to guide the students see reasons for peaceful coexistence within and between different faithful and proper solutions to problems of religious, communal, and political crises as well as religious extremism. Drug abuse and alcoholism are at alarming rate in our communities, they lead to so many social vices and their effect is vicious. In a typical classroom, teacher will present a scenario or play video clip that will provoke the curiosity of his students and then guide them to the topic ‘Avoidance of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse’. The students under proper guidance of their teacher will think critically, appreciate the negative and nasty life style of drunkards/drug addicts and subsequently offer possible solutions to the problem.

Going by the above, after successful presentation of the scenario/situation/case/question to the students in words or video clip, the teacher will then guide the students to fine related laws in both Qur’an and Hadith, then analyse the problem, compile related laws from the Holy Qur’an and Hadith, discuss the issue and lastly draw conclusion. It is quiet noting that, the steps in Problem Based Learning must feature in the process (i.e. problem presentation, finding related laws, problem analysis, compiling laws, discussion and conclusion).

Poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of unity and brotherhood, drug abuse and alcoholism, unwanted pregnancy, rape, sodomy, and other forms of sexual harassments among our teenage girls and boys are real life problem that spoilt our communities and Problem Based Learning is all about solving real life problem by applying high level critical thinking.

Conclusion:

Problem Based Learning is all about solving real life problem. Based on this, it is expressly concluded that Problem based Learning is quiet relevant in teaching Senior Secondary School Islamic studies must especially ‘fiqh’(Islamic jurisprudence) aspect of the subject. It is also concluded that if effectively implemented, Problem Based Learning will help our youth develop critical thinking ability which in turn able them to be solving real life problems that we are facing in our communities.

Suggestions:

Based on the above conclusion, it is suggested that:

1. Islamic studies teachers should be employing Problem Based Learning in order to help our youth acquire critical thinking ability.
2. Well qualified and professional teachers should be employed so as to be able to be employing the Problem Based Learning in teaching.
3. The strategy is too demanding and time consuming, as such teachers should be well remunerated so as to motivate them to be employing the strategy.
4. Workshops, seminars, symposiums should be regularly organized to equip and sensitize the teachers on the necessity, process, application and evaluation and implication of the strategy.

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