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Students' Experiences in Teaching and Learning Islamic Education Using Philosophical Inquiry Method

Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff[1]*, Abdul Shakour Preece[2], Lina Mursyidah Hamzah[3]
[1]Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia
[2,3]Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that traditional chalk and talk teaching methods are common among teachers of Islamic Education. Such teacher-centered pedagogy fails to promote active learning or interaction between the teacher and students; and between students and students. The result is a lack of interest in learning because students are not stimulated or engaged by interesting classroom activity or pedagogy. Numerous studies conducted by a host of countries have proven that Philosophical Inquiry Method (PIM) is effective in promoting discussion and getting students to be actively involved in learning, as they discover new meanings. Having said this, little is known about the impact PIM on Malaysian Islamic Education students' engagement. Therefore, an exploratory case study was conducted to gauge students' views and experiences of PIM to teach aqidah (creed). The study involved students aged 13 – 14 years old who were in Form 2 at an Islamic secondary school in Selangor, focusing particularly on the Islamic Education subject of aqidah. After completing six philosophical inquiry sessions, four students were interviewed to gauge their responses to the programme. The results of the study showed that students found the lessons easier to understand, as they explored beyond the content of the textbook and they enjoyed this new pedagogy. In the light of this, it can be said that PIM gave students a positive learning experience for the subject of aqidah.

Corresponding Author:

Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff
Departement of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies,
International Islamic University Malaysia,
53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Email: wanmazwati@iium.edu.my

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest tasks in education is to engage school students in teaching and learning [1], [2], [3], [4]. According to Swartz and Perkin [5] 'cognitive environment' in the classroom enhances the relationships between 'teacher-student' and 'student-student' leading students to become more actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Needless to say, teaching methods differ from one teacher to another and depending upon the background of the students and subject specialization. Teachers are therefore an important factor that can have a marked effect on the communication in the classroom. Sueraya [6] claims that teachers play a pivotal role in encouraging students to think, and their teaching methodology is a reflection of their initiative and creativity to achieve this. Teachers relying solely on traditional methods like lecturing often display less communication between the teacher and the students.

Islamic education is a required subject for Muslim students in Malaysia. The aim of Islamic education is to produce good Muslims who are well-balanced physically, psychologically, intellectually, and spiritually. Good moral character is an indicator that a person is intelligent and healthy physically, psychologically and spiritually. The archetype of good moral character is the behavior of the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first step used by Prophet Muhammad in the development of good moral character was to build a strong unwavering foundation for thought and action in every Muslim. In other words, building strong aqidah (creed). Hence, Islamic education taught in schools should enable students to understand Islamic aqidah and internalize its teaching in their daily lives. Strong aqidah can be developed only when students are able to defend their belief with evidence from logical argument and from scientific and historical investigation. This is done by means of analysing, interpreting, evaluating, making inferences, explaining, elaborating, generating multiple explanations and considering the perspectives of past and present human experience, as well as 'reported truth' from sound authorities. Thus, Islamic education is not merely about the transferring of information from the mind of the teacher to the mind to students; instead it is the fruit of intense activity and complex thinking.

Studies show that Malaysian Muslim students who are involved in immoral activities do not lack information about Islamic aqidah [7], but rather that this knowledge is not being translated into moral behavior. One of the factors contributing to this problem, in the opinion of the researchers, is a superficial understanding of Islamic aqidah. Students are asked to memorize facts from the text book or from teachers' notes on the board without adequate understanding [8], [9], [10]. Moreover, students' minds are not stimulated by higher order questions that provoke them to contemplate or reflect deeply. Instead, traditional, teacher-centred methods treat learners as passive recipients of information [11], [12], [13] and dialogue, discussions and debates are minimal or non-existent [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]. The opportunity for students to develop their critical and creative thinking in the Islamic education classroom is so limited that students tend to lose interest in learning Islamic Studies altogether [20], [21], [22], [23]. This could create a barrier between the students and Islamic studies that could hinder them from developing good moral character. Consequently, students should be encouraged and supported to develop their critical thinking skills by means of two-way communication and classroom discussions.

According to al-Ghazali [24] knowledge is the result of processing information using excellent thinking that enables the knowledge bearer to behave in conformity with this knowledge. Hence, information gained from teachers or from books without the process of thinking should not be really be called knowledge. Gaining knowledge is not only about being able to describe the object of knowledge, but also to be able to act according to the purpose for which that knowledge was sought and to be able to apply it in various context. This requires higher order thinking. Unfortunately, the teaching methods prevalent in Malaysian schools for imparting Islamic studies do not engage students in intellectual discourse. Teachers therefore need to employ different methods that engage students in high order thinking to enable them to make correct decisions on what to believe and how to act. After all, al-Qur'an reminds us again and again to use our minds and to think.

Aderi, Noh and Kasim [10] argue that Islamic education teachers need to improve their pedagogy to cultivate students' interest in learning and to engage them in stimulating discussion. This is because they are supposedly the future generation of Muslim intellectuals, leaders and members of society who will need a deep understanding of Islam in order to solve issues and problem that are arising in our time. Teaching and learning that focuses on rote learning without proper explanation, discussion or which is unrelated to current events is likely to be meaningless and ineffective, because students will be unable to articulate the lessons delivered to them by their teachers and will tend to forget what they have learned. It will be difficult for them to apply the knowledge they have memorised to solve real-life problems. Such students are likely to be extrinsically motivated; studying to get good grades rather than learning out of a genuine interest to understand. To this end, the study explored a method that has potential to engage students in their own learning and provide them with a different yet meaningful learning experience. This method is called Philosophical Inquiry Method (PIM).

1.1. The Pedagogy of Philosophical Inquiry

Regarding Philosophical Inquiry we find that the word 'inquiry' means an investigation to find answers to problematic situations. However, there is no consensus about the meaning of the word 'philosophy'. Many scholars agree that philosophy is about using excellent thinking to deliberate on important and fundamental issues that form the foundation of thought and action. The main activity of philosophy is exploring one's own and others' assumptions and worldviews; also called 'doing philosophy', which is not exclusive to philosophers as it involves asking questions and thinking hard about fundamental life issues that affect everybody. Questions such as: Does God exist? What is the purpose of life? What is a person? What is reality? What is happiness? How do I know the truth? Why is there evil in the world? How am I to live? and Is human action predetermined? People usually contemplate and reflect on such questions stimulated by the events that have happened in their lives, such as death, illness, war and so on. These are called 'philosophical questions' and cannot be answered by empirical research. Questions that ask about metaphysics, epistemology and axiology resist resolution through empirical investigation. We are also 'doing philosophy'

when we question accepted norms and beliefs around us, to find the reasons for or against those accepted norms and beliefs, before accepting or rejecting them.

The only instrument suitable for finding solutions to philosophical questions is the human intellect. Our answers to such questions are in fact our claims about life's most fundamental questions and issues, supported by reasons and evidence. Claims are statements that contain truth value i.e. statements that are either true or false. Therefore, claims must be supported with reasons. Thus, an important part of doing philosophy is giving good reasons. Doing philosophy also involves critical analysis and the evaluation of claims made or reasons posited by philosophers and other individuals about such fundamental life questions. That is, making judgments about the truth-value of such claims. Philosophy can be done alone or in a community using dialogue. Whether it is done alone, through books or in a community, doing philosophy requires the employment of philosophical thinking method i.e. a set of skills and intellectual habits. Doing philosophy involves the following components [25]:
1.   Identifying the type of claim made
2.   Clarifying the meaning of the key concept in the claim
3.   Evaluating supporting arguments for the claim made
4.   Analyzing the truth value of the premises
5.   Analyzing the truth value of the assumptions
6.   Evaluating the plausibility of the logical consequences
7.   Evaluating the adequacy and fitness of the philosophical theory made

Philosophical Inquiry (PI) is an investigation into the subject matter of philosophy using philosophical thinking in a philosophical discussion. This method was pioneered by Mathew Lipman [26] as a teaching method requiring both students and teachers as well as students and students to interact with each other, during teaching and learning sessions in order to practise philosophical thinking skills. It was in 1974 that Professor Matthew Lipman founded his program known as Philosophy for Children (P4C). The main purpose of P4C, according to Lipman [27], was to help students to reason independently and think more wisely through philosophical dialogue in the classroom. This dialogue comprises questioning, discussing, and experimenting with ideas and is a core activity for developing philosophical skills and arriving at the truth [28].

In a dialogue, questions are raised to clarify meaning; to uncover underlying assumptions; to demand justification of claims; to expose implications and consequences of philosophical theses; to question the questions posed; and to look for other possible explanation or perspectives [29]. Doing philosophy using dialogue implies that philosophy is done in a group. Lipman [26] called this a 'community of inquiry' (CI). In a CI dialogue, participants are compelled to think quickly and rationally to clarify meanings and to justify claims. In an attempt to clarify views and claims, each member tries to make her or his explanation or justification understood. Alternative ways of explaining may take the form of analogies, metaphors, and similes. Philosophical inquiry in a community allows members to perceive each other's views, and this broaden their perspectives. It can even help to build their worldview. In an attempt to justify claims, one may discover one's own assumptions that one was not conscious of. This can be a meaningful and life changing discovery that may cause one to change one's beliefs, if we realize that our hidden assumptions support some erroneous belief. What is more, doing philosophy in a group enables participants to realize their errors in reasoning, which could go undetected if done in isolation. Additionally, members of a community of inquiry learn from one another's experience, challenging each other to come up with the most reasonable or defensible opinion.

1.2. Community of Inquiry

Doing philosophical inquiry in a circle or U-shaped seating arrangement is a special feature of CI. A classroom that is turned into a CI is different from regular classrooms. In CI, students share a common goal and work collaboratively towards achieving it. In CI, each member's well-being is important to every other member of the community. Therefore, in CI there is no question of personal interest for "the question of whose advantage it is, never comes up because you always take other people's points of view into account" [27]. In CI, the teacher supervises the procedural aspect of the inquiry and blends into the community as a member [30]. Each member is considered equal.

According to Davey [31], there are two aspects of CI. Besides the procedural aspect, there is the substantive aspect of the inquiry. This means that the dialogue in CI should produce something. Hence, "CI is not aimless. It is a process that aims at producing a product" [26]. Gardner [32] posits that CI "must make some progress towards truth to be worthy of its name". She explains that progress is important since production increases students' enthusiasm to engage collaboratively in a CI and "progress is vital if participants are to develop those clusters of skills and habits of mind". Products of a CI include new depth of understanding of certain concepts and problems, creation of new meanings, application of knowledge,

alternative perspectives, contribution of new ideas, building on the ideas of others, making good analogies and metaphors and stating the implications of a philosophical theory.

CI provides a platform for students to develop their thinking, to make moral judgment and to engage in social inquiry [33]. It gives opportunity for students to actively participate in the learning process. In CI, students learn together by sharing experiences, and collaborating to arrive at understanding and to discover meanings and knowledge under the guidance of a facilitator. "It is an example of the value of shared experience" [26]. Working together in a community requires students to care and respect each other, to be reflective, considerate, thoughtful, and reasonable [31]. Therefore, CI is a place for developing ethical thinking, necessary for making informed decisions concerning interrelations with others and with the environment. CI also provides an opportunity for the development of a systematic worldview since its content of discussion is about the fundamental issues of life.

The teacher's role in CI is that of a facilitator who guides students during the philosophical discussions. The teacher should be able to relate the philosophical theme discussed in class to students' lives; to introduce alternative perspectives on the issues discussed; to broaden students' horizons; to demonstrate enthusiasm for excellence in thinking and behavior and most importantly to be a role model in the pursuit of meaning. Lipman [27] considers the role of the teacher during philosophical discussion as one who:
1.   Elicits views and clarifications from students
2.   Explains and interprets students' responses to confirm understanding
3.   Points out inconsistencies in students' responses
4.   Searches for assumptions underlying students' claims
5.   Identifies fallacies in students' reasoning
6.   Asks for justifications

Constructivism is an apt theory for the study since it explains how individuals learn through their own understanding and interpretation of personal experience and knowledge of the world [34]. Philosophical inquiry allows students to interpret the meaning of the lesson in their own way. To this end, teachers need to carefully select the lesson content to match and develop students' cognitive abilities.

1.3. Muslim Scholars' Views on Philosophical Inquiry

Al-Ghazali's [35] critical evaluation of philosophy concluded that philosophical method can be a measure of knowledge. He wrote in Qistas al-Mustaqim (Just Balance) that a person cannot rely on religious leaders to solve his problems all the time. There will be times when he has to use his own reasoning to evaluate knowledge. He suggests that the philosophical method of reasoning is a just scale for evaluating knowledge, to get away from blind imitation. Ibn Khaldun [36] agreed that philosophy, "sharpens the mind through orderly presentation of proofs and arguments, so that the habit of excellent and correct arguing is obtained". Likewise, Hamka [37] concurred that philosophy is a tool to exercise the intellect. He further states that so long as man continues to think and ask questions and to wonder about the secrets of life and existence, philosophy will continue. Ibn Rushd [38] posited that intellectual reasoning is a religious obligation, and since intellectual reasoning is a method of philosophy, he too concluded that the study of philosophy is a religious obligation.

Kaloti [39] reports that Jamaluddin Afghani urged Muslims to include philosophy in their education for it enhances the mind to perceive intellectually and thereby deliver the Muslims from weak reasoning. Afghani's disciple, Muhammad Abduh, claimed that the intellectual bewilderment that plagues the Muslim community is a consequence of a lack of rational thinking [40]. He asserted that philosophy, which enhances rational thinking, was taught and learned at the Ash'ari's school. Muslims at that time never eschewed the Ash'ari's school. He maintained that through philosophy ideas are generated to comprehend the intelligible, "from pure reason and the philosophers only concerned is to gain knowledge, to satisfy their intellectual curiosity in elucidating the unknown". He further claimed that the expulsion of philosophy from the Sunni Muslim world stifled the progress of knowledge seeking. Seyed Zafer ul Hasan [41], a Professor at the Muslim University Aligarh, argued that a person who studies philosophy "…develops the habit of thinking for himself– thinking impartially, systematically and comprehensively to get clear on the profoundest problems of man. The study, therefore, develops his rational faculties more than any other branch of study. He sees things better than others; his reasoning becomes sounder and his judgment more profound. These qualities certainly help in the conduct of life and in all its concerns".

1.4. Students' Views on Philosophical Inquiry

Stabile [42] and Leckey [43] found that students were engaged by and participated actively in philosophical inquiry discussions. Until they were introduced to philosophical inquiry, the students claimed that they did not see the relevance of learning social studies. They felt that philosophical inquiry addresses real life issues affecting them directly. In a recent study by Hashim, Hussein and Juperi [44] about the impact

of teaching Islamic Education using PIM it was discovered that students enjoyed the philosophical discussions saying that they understood the concepts taught in Islamic Education classes better. Students also participated actively in class and valued the opportunity given to them to ask questions and express their opinions. Hashim, Hussein and Imran [45] conducted a quantitative study that confirmed the findings of previous studies. They reported that 73% of 188 students at an international school in Malaysia enjoyed PIM and claimed that the method helped them to think better. Furthermore, they found the method interesting.

Similarly, Gasparatou and Ergazaki [46] reported that students enjoyed discussing important issues and claimed that philosophical inquiry improved their thinking and understanding. They felt the joy of sharing and expressing their ideas. Findings from a study conducted by Siddiqui, Gorard and See [47] aimed at exploring the non-cognitive impact of the Philosophy for Children program. Their findings corroborated the findings of the other studies mentioned above. The current research was conducted in Malaysia in an attempt to confirm the findings of the aforementioned studies as research into PIM in Malaysian is quite sporadic, due to it being relatively unknown to Malaysian educators and policy makers. Professor Rosnani Hashim and her team at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) have striven hard to promote PIM by producing empirical evidence about the positive impact on students' higher order thinking skills, engagement in learning and other non-cognitive effects. Since students are the main stakeholders of the education system, their views about what interests them and what they find enjoyable needs to be discovered. Furthermore, the study aims to provide evidence from the students' perspectives to enrich the PIM literature in the teaching of Islamic Studies in Malaysia, as well as to assist Malaysian education authorities to make informed decisions for the betterment of the education and the curriculum.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed qualitative research methodology, namely, an exploratory case study, because it attempted to investigate empirically the existing phenomenon within the actual setting where the demarcation line between problems investigated and the context within which the problems occur are not obvious [48]. Furthermore, case studies provide rich, in-depth information about the application of PIM in the selected learning environment for the purpose of evaluation [49]. Qualitative case studies also enabled the researchers to employ a variety of data collection instruments, such as: focussed group interview, individual interviews and observation [50]. Specifically, the study employed an exploratory case study to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of PIM employed to teach aqidah within the context of Malaysia. This was done to gauge students' views and experiences of philosophical inquiry in the classroom. However, the findings of this study only explained the behavior of students from selected classroom. The results cannot be generalized to the whole school student population, or to other schools that experienced learning using PIM.

The data collected by the study was drawn from students'views and thoughts about their experiences during learning with PIM. A total of thirty-seven Secondary Two students consented to be observed for the purpose of the study. They were guaranteed anonymity and privacy and that the information was collected purely for research purposes. Six PIM sessions were conducted for study, to give the students enough exposure and experience of the method to form informed opinions and views about PIM. Each session took approximately 40 minutes and students' behaviour was observed during the PIM sessions to determine the level of their participation in discussions and related thinking activities. The researchers kept detailed field notes, based on a checklist of thinking skills. After four sessions, students were interviewed individually about their experiences during the PIM sessions. Several names were suggested by the teacher for interviewing, four of whom agreed to be interviewed. The interviewees consisted of two female students and two males who were coded: P1 to P4. The data collected from the interviews was then analysed using thematic analysis. Two main themes emerged which were subsequently validated by two expert inter-raters for reliability.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The first significant finding was that students found PIM very engaging. The students were given stories containing paradoxes, metaphors and cognitive dissonance which stimulated them to read and find out the meanings. In addition, they were given other stimuli, such as pictures and verses of the Qur'an. By observing students' thinking skills in the PIM discussions, it was evident that the first session was tough for them as beginners as they struggled to ask meaningful, philosophical questions. However, the rigour of formulating philosophical questions activated their minds and in subsequent sessions they became more adept at asking philosophical questions. During the stage where they had to answer their own questions, students grappled with the skills of clarifying meaning, giving examples and counter examples, examining

evidence and giving reasons for holding onto their claims. They were able to point out inconsistencies in the stimulus materials and identified some of their own assumptions. They also defended their own beliefs and provided logical, historical and scientific evidence. Occasionally, they used analogies to explain difficult, abstract concepts and towards the end, the students were asked to draw a conclusion as well as come up with the logical consequences of their own claims and conclusions. The majority of students became actively involved in the discussions, and whilst some students appeared to be quiet, their body language indicated that they were listening i.e. they sat upright and nodded and shook their heads. After experiencing four sessions, the researchers felt that students were ready to be interviewed about their views and experiences during the philosophical discussions.

The second significant finding was the emergence of two main themes generated from the student-interviews. The first theme was 'students' learning experience during PIM sessions', and the second, significantly, was 'students' enjoyment of the PIM sessions'. The students maintained that PIM was different from other methods used by the teacher. Normally, their teacher would address the subject directly by referring to the textbook and students were not encouraged to ask questions or to discuss questions. Moreover, it was the teacher who asked the questions and the students role was simply to answer the questions. Respondent P1 said, "Teachers always teach us first and then explain by only using the textbook. Then, she asked us to do an exercise, that is, answer the questions in the book. That's all." Student P3 supported this view by stating that, "My teacher usually opened the textbook and referred to the textbook while teaching us but yours was different." Similarly, P4 claimed that, "My teacher, used old style, and always explain the content of the lesson but your method is different…" In contrast, PIM used stimulus materials like stories and pictures, not the textbook. This allowed students to experience a different way of learning. Student P1 described PIM as different because, "…for your style of teaching, you gave us text, pictures…". Student P3 shared the same view saying, "…you gave us paper that contained story…". They opined that this method also differed from regular classes because students were the ones to ask the questions "…and you asked us to describe and formulate the questions from the materials".

The students felt that using stimulus materials besides the textbook was interesting and fun. Student P3 stated that PIM was fun and fascinating because the stories were "fun and interesting and you asked us to develop questions…". Furthermore, the students thought that the sessions were fun and enjoyable compared to the conventional method of teaching. Student P1 said, "… I like your style more rather than the old style..." and student P4 corroborated this view. The students agreed that not only were they given opportunities to explore the literal meaning of the materials, but they were encouraged to read between the lines and see the ideas and messages underpinning the topics and stories. Student P4 said, "your style was like you gave us a material to explore latent messages behind the topic or behind the story that we discussed in the classroom and I found out this is better and very enjoyable...". It was amazing that the students highlighted how PIM sessions enabled them to go beyond the textbook. Students felt this new approach was very interesting and enjoyable, compared to the lecture method used by their teacher, which they found monotonous because learning was confined to the textbook. In short, the findings of this study confirm the findings of previous studies conducted by Hashim, Hussein and Juperi [44], Gasparatou and Ergazaki [46], and Siddiqui, Gorard and See [47].

Besides asserting that PIM was different and enjoyable, the data indicated that students were able to understand better the lessons taught using PIM. Put another way, the activity of formulating questions and then answering those questions together in a discussion facilitated students' understanding of the lessons. Student P1 opined that "When you asked us to formulate the questions and we answered them together, I felt like it was easier for me to understand the lesson". She admitted that PIM was tough at the beginning but after a few sessions, she could understand well and it was encouraging when she said "it felt so wonderful to understand". Students P4 shared similar view. He said it was difficult at first because he had to find meanings underpinning the texts. However, PIM surprised him and said that "I felt that it was easier to understand the lesson… I did not try so hard to memorise the lesson but I understood the lesson well" and this satisfied him. He further said that "it feels so good to understand the lesson rather than memorising everything…" The quality of the answers and students' understanding was dependent upon the quality of the questions posed by students. In PIM, students' high-order questions facilitate higher-order thinking and in turn understanding. In spite of students grappling with the procedures of PIM and their role during discussion, they caught on quickly after only few sessions, and this made them feel wonderful. The experience of discovery learning was liberating for them.

After the PIM sessions, students understood and remembered the lessons because they went through an elaborate process of thinking and classroom discussion. Students P3 said that "It was easier for me to understand because I got to express my point and PIM made me understand the lesson better compared to the old method". P2 shared the same view stating that PIM stimulated him to think deeply and this helped her to understand the lesson well. Gaining a deep understanding of the concepts of a lesson through discovery

provides a long-lasting impression in the hearts and minds of students, increasing the likelihood that students will apply what they have learnt to their daily lives. The discussions involved interaction between the instructor and the students and between students and students, creating an exchange of ideas that could be the beginning of a two-way communication between the teacher and the students, making them more active in class [6].

The findings of the study suggest that students had fun and enjoyed learning in depth, which is in-line with Syed Naquib Al-Attas's [51] concept of education where he defines education as a continuous process of instilling faith. In other words, students who understand Islamic education have more chance of developing the characteristics of a good Muslim. Students' whose thinking and minds are aroused are more likely to grasp the gist of the lesson [52].

These findings are significant for a number of reasons. First, policy makers and the Malaysian education authorities may see the need to revise the curriculum and introduce PIM as a new approach for Islamic education. This could give students a better understanding of Islam and its teachings. Internalizing the teachings of Islam, in its truest sense, means that Muslim students would be able to manage themselves better, which could impact on the social problems facing Muslim teenagers today. In short, it is anticipated that PIM has the potential to improve students critical thinking, reasoning and in turn their decision making; leading to better behaviour and decision making in their lives.

The study shows, contrary to the views of opponents, that introducing philosophy and critical thinking into Islamic education using PIM is indeed possible, in spite of the crowded Malaysian Islamic studies curriculum. The main recommendation on the part of the researchers for future studies is to select small class sizes and to conduct the research for a longer period of time. In addition, it would be revealing to conduct studies using PIM to teach other subjects of the curriculum such as history and language.

4.   CONCLUSION

There is a pressing need for a review of the teaching methods used in Islamic Studies in Malaysia, if the objectives of Islamic education are to be achieved. For clearer understanding in aqidah, students need to be able to defend their beliefs and produce evidence that can withstand critical examination. Effective Islamic education means stimulating and improving higher-order thinking skills for an in-depth understanding of aqidah. This is the foundation of sound thought and action. Some important criteria for effective teaching methods are the ability to attract and retain students' attention and interest, as well as to bring enjoyment to learning in order to facilitate understanding. In this way, the discrepancy between students' behaviour and the ideals of Islamic education can be narrowed. This exploratory case study was conducted to gauge students' views and experiences gained from engaging in philosophical inquiry. The findings indicate that students participated actively in discussions about the questions and issues raised by students, and they enjoyed these sessions because they stimulated them to engage in high-order thinking. Most importantly, the students reported that they understood the lessons well which made them feel amazing. Being able to understand is like being given a light in the darkness which is why students found the process so liberating.

In conclusion, the teaching and learning process of Islamic education needs to be approached in new ways to include a variety of instructional strategies and materials. Today's learners feel the need to participate actively in lessons, rather than be viewed as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, since information is easily accessible nowadays on-line. Furthermore, with the negative influences of the media and the breakdown of modern society, the need to implement Islam in our daily lives has never been greater. To facilitate this, students must understand what they are learning in Islamic education classes. PIM fosters this by getting students to think for themselves, rather than following blindly the traditions and indoctrination of their superiors, as this can lead to parroting and a lack of understanding about the meaning and significance of lessons. Through PIM, students can differentiate between truth and falsehood; between valid and invalid arguments and between evidence and examples that support a point of view. These are crucial skills for Islamic education, as many of the key concepts and principles are easily misunderstood particularly in the realm of 'aqidah'. In Islamic aqidah, topics are often deep and subtle, requiring deep reflection and skill on the part of the teacher e.g. belief in the unseen world (ghaib). In such matters, PIM allows students to explore and deepen their faith in God. By means of questioning, reasoning and discussion, the skilful Islamic Studies teacher use PIM to make students eager to attend classes to find the answers to their most challenging questions.

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