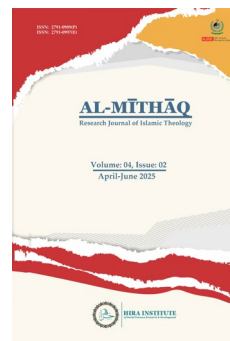




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|---|--|
| 1. Dr. Atta ur Rahman
a.rehman@cch.edu.pk | Assistant Professor,
Cadet College Hassan Abdal, Distt Attock. |
| 2. Dr. Haji Rahman
haji616@ubuner.edu.pk | Assistant Professor,
Department of Management Sciences, University of Buner. |
| 3. Dr. Aftab Ahmad
dr.aftabahmad@sbbu.edu.pk | Assistant Professor,
Department of Islamic Studies,
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sheringal, Dir Upper. |

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Creativity and Novelty Introduced by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) In Education

1. Dr. Atta ur Rahman

*Assistant Professor, Cadet College Hassan Abdal, Distt Attock.
a.rehman@cch.edu.pk*

2. Dr. Haji Rahman

*Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences, University of Buner.
haji616@ubuner.edu.pk*

3. Dr. Aftab Ahmad

*Assistant Professor,
Department of Islamic Studies, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sheringal, Dir Upper.
dr.aftabahmad@sbbu.edu.pk*

Abstract

This research manuscript aims to explore how creativity and novelty were introduced by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in education. Innovative techniques for the education and grooming of his people were applied. Motivation and appreciation were the tools he utilized to enable people to acquire education. The nation's cream was also encouraged to adopt teaching as a profession. Education was declared compulsory for all men and women in the society. Long-term and short-term planning was formulated to achieve a rapid and high literacy rate. The heads of the families and neighbours were tasked to educate all and sundry. Even a special group of people was tasked to educate others. Even skills like critical thinking were encouraged among his companions by adopting a distinctive style. Pen was highly valued, and specialization in various fields of knowledge was also promoted. Women were highly encouraged to acquire education. Even co-curricular activities like humour, debates, poetry, races, wrestling, horse-riding, archery, swimming etc, were introduced to prepare people for life and transform them into future global leaders. Then the world saw the impact of the Prophet's measures in education, and an indelible mark was left on human history. Muslims surpassed other nations and progressed socially, economically, and politically, and Islam reached far-flung areas of the world. Qur'ān, ḥadīths, history books, websites, and journals will be consulted to add value to this article in an explorative and descriptive way.

Keywords: *Teaching, Learning, Creativity, Novelty, Curricular Activities, Education.*

Introduction

Creativity and innovative approaches are gaining popularity in modern education so that learners are prepared for an unpredictable and constantly changing world. They are trained to accept challenges, create new but useful ideas and solutions, and bring about valuable results. Innovation in teaching-learning strategies is a loud cry in modern education.

Today's widespread social media and vibrant technology in life have deeply impacted the focus of the young generation. To deliver lessons to such a generation, which is named Gen Z¹ is a challenging task. A good educator needs to use various useful strategies in the teaching and learning process so that the process is made not only effective but also inclusive and interesting. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was divinely gifted to be an ideal teacher. His pedagogical approaches had all the essential variety. Research is conducted on innovation and creativity in modern education, and it is significant to relate innovation and creativity to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and it also proves the superiority of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

This is an undeniable fact that he immensely contributed to the cause of education because of the new ideas he gave to the world. He showed the world how to educate all people including women, adults, and even the new generation. The Prophet (ﷺ) took various innovative measures to educate and groom people. He prepared them for the future global leadership role. They excelled the whole world in every field.

Review of Literature

Few attempts have been made in this direction, and scholars have written different books and articles. Despite this, it still requires more attention in the form of research related to this particular area. The works in this regard are mentioned below:

1. Nabī Karīm Baḥaithiyat-e-Mu‘allim (The Prophet (ﷺ) as a Teacher) by Prof. Dr Fazal Ilahi: This book was published by Qudusiya Islamic Press in 2005. It mentions various teaching methods applied by the Prophet (PBUH) but needs to discuss the modern ones in the present world.
2. Mithālī Ustad (An Ideal Teacher) by Hafiz Mehboob Ahmad Khan: This book is published by Maktabat-ul-Ilm 18, Lahore. It beautifully describes the Prophet (ﷺ)'s various qualities as a teacher but does not relate them to modern teaching-learning methods in education today.
3. Islam ka Niẓām-e-T‘alīm (The educational System of Islam) by Prof. Syed Muhammad Saleem²: This book was published by Idara-Taleem-e-Tahqeeq, Lahore in 1993. It is an excellent description of the educational system during the period of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and the reign of Umayyads.
4. Prophet Muhammad’s Guidance for Children by Dr. Abdur Rauf: This book was published by FEROSONS (PVT.) LTD, Lahore-Rawalpindi-Karachi, in 1989. It focuses on the development of character and personality among modern children.
5. Student-Centered Learning Approach in Education and Islamic Perspective by Khadija Khatoon.³ This is an M.Phil. thesis conducted at HITEC University, Taxila, 2017, and describes/ focuses on student-centered education from an Islamic perspective.

Although considerable literature exists on the educational system during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) in the form of books and articles, none of the prominent works are found to be connected with the creativity and novelty of the Prophet (ﷺ) in education. A discussion on analysing the creativity and novelty of the Prophet (ﷺ) in education is rare. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was, no doubt, ahead of his time and adopted new approaches to accelerate the literacy rate in the Peninsula of Arabia, revolutionize his people, and prepare them for a leadership role.

Concentration on the Skills of Literacy

The Prophet (ﷺ)'s approach was creative because he was not only an excellent teacher but also a great leader. He influenced all the people around him. He showed them how to bring about an educational change.

The basic literacy skills were uncommon in his society, and people would feel hesitant to read and write. So, he concentrated on the overhauling of the society through education. He understood the significance of these literacy skills. He termed them compulsory because he wished for an outstanding change among the people of Arabia. He successfully tried to shift their focus from killing, looting, and fighting to leading the world through an educational revolution. Interestingly, he was not lettered like the people of his society. Despite this, he focused on the development of fundamental literacy skills. His being unlettered is mentioned in the Qur’ān in the following words,

“Allah sent a messenger among the unlettered.”⁴

Before Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in Makkah, there were only seventeen lettered people, and their names are below:

- ‘Alī Bin Abī Tālib
- ‘Umar Bin Khattāb
- ‘Ubaidah Bin al Jarrāh
- ‘Usman Bin ‘Affān
- Yazīd Bin Abī Sufyān
- Ṭalha Bin ‘Ubaidullāh
- Ḥaṭīb Bin Abī Balta‘
- Ibn Utaibah Bin Rabī‘ah
- Abū Ḥuzaifah
- Aban Bin Sa‘īd Ibn-al Aās Bin Ummayya
- Abū Salma Bin ‘Abdul Asad Al Makhzūmī
- ‘Abdullah Bin Sa‘īd Bin Abī Sarḥ
- Khālīd Bin Sa‘īd
- Abū Sufyān Bin al Ḥarb
- Ḥuwaitib Ibn ‘Abdul Izza Al Aamrī
- Juhaīm Ibn Al Alth
- Mu‘āwiyah Bin Abū Sufyān⁵

Among the women folk in Makkah, only Hz Hafsa (RA), Hz Umm-e-Kulthūm (RA), and Hz Shifā Bint-e-‘Abdullah al-Adwiyā (RA) knew how to read and write while Hz ‘Āyesha (RA) and Hz Umm-e-Salmah (RA) knew reading only but could not write at that time.⁶

In the city of Madinah, seven people of the tribes of Khazrij and Aus knew the fundamental skills of literacy. The person who, at that time, could read and write well was named “Al-Kāmil (The Perfect)” and only Hz Sa‘ad Bin ‘Ubādah (RA), Hz Usaid Bin Khazīr (RA), and Hz Swaid Bin Al-Ṣāmit (RA) were called as “Al-Kāmil”.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was cognizant of this terrible academic condition of his people. Therefore, the following measures were taken to better the literacy rate of his people:

Method of Motivation

The method of motivation was introduced by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to arouse people to acquire knowledge. The Qur’ān as a basic tool was utilized to encourage people to write and read. The first revealed verses of the Qur’ān are a testament to it and indicate the importance of the literacy skills of writing, reading, and the acquisition of knowledge:

Read in the name of your lord who created, who created man from a piece of flesh, read and your lord is bountiful, he taught through the pen, taught man what he did not know.”⁷

Allah Almighty clearly distinguishes between the knowledgeable and the ignorant people:

Say, are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endowed with understanding that receive admonition.⁸

The Qur’ān declares the knowledgeable people as the most God-fearing:

“Those truly fear God, among His servants knowing.”⁹

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) strongly believed that social evils and conflicts can easily be resolved if society is empowered with knowledge. Moreover, people with knowledge will be raised as leaders in the next world as well. God will accept their intercession, thus facilitating the entry of others into paradise. So, the Qur’ān and hadiths were utilized to motivate people to get knowledge and develop basic skills of literacy.

Establishment of Dār-e-Arqam and Şuffah Academies

The Prophet (ﷺ) had a great vision which he translated into a reality. He took numerous measures like the establishment of the first academic institution in Dār-e-Arqam in the city of Makkah and a residential academy at the place of Şuffah in the city of Madina. In these institutions, the concentration was made on the grooming and education of people. Nine other Masājīd (mosques) had been established in Madinah to impart education and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) supervised them.¹⁰ The Mosque of Qubā, having an educational institution, was also looked after by him.¹¹

These evidences indicate that the Prophet (ﷺ) had a vision to educate people and planned accordingly to bring about a drastic and durable revolution. It was clear to him how to turn his vision into a reality. He promoted the cause of education by planning wisely and working enthusiastically and systematically to achieve his aim.

A Great Lesson to Learn

The revolution brought by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has given the world a lesson that illiteracy is, no doubt, evil. It may be subdued if determination is accompanied by a vision, planning, and commitment. The Prophet (ﷺ) took only twenty-three years to transform his people into global leaders, thus raising the literacy rate to 80 % in Arabia. It rarely happens by taking so little time to do such a miracle. The transformation of nations takes centuries. Yet, it became possible because of the wisdom and sincerity of the Prophet (ﷺ).

An Innovative Approach in the Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr is the first Battle of Islam. It happened in the 2nd year of migration. Muslims emerged victorious in it. Seventy Qureshite men came into the custody of the Muslims as prisoners of war. The issue was whether to liberate them with ransom or put them to death and the decision was taken to set them free with a ransom. The ransom for an educated prisoner of war was teaching ten illiterate people how to read and write.¹² This idea of the Prophet (ﷺ) was novel and meaningful for the development and spread of basic literacy skills. For the first time in the history of mankind, it happened that an unmatched academic assignment was taken from the war prisoners.

On the other hand, the Muslims desperately needed monetary assistance at that time for easy settlement in Madinah because their economic condition was miserable. Yet, it is surprising to note that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not compromise on the educational needs and progress of his people. Otherwise, they could manage to meet their military needs easily with the help of which they could survive and resist a permanent threat from the Quraish side.

It exhibits the vision of the Prophet (ﷺ) on one side while his wise planning and implementation in education on the other. This is a wonderful instance of the novelty and creativity of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

The Construction of Masjid-e-Nabwī

The construction of the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah is a landmark in Islamic history. This masjid was not only a worshipping place but was also used for educational purposes.

¹³The wisdom of the Prophet (ﷺ) is visible from the double utilization of this masjid. Şuffah was used for the transfer of knowledge and gave a new idea of how to use the places of worship (particularly masjid) for different academic and non-academic purposes. These places can also be utilized for the *Tarbiyat* (grooming) of the coming generations. Moreover, they may be utilized for residence and military purposes, and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did so. It displays the novelty and creativity of the Prophet (ﷺ) in education.

Education for All

The United Nations recognizes the importance of education by establishing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 “Quality Education”. It states that education is the key

to allowing other SDGs to be achieved as getting a quality education enables a person to escape the cycle of poverty, helps reduce inequalities, reach gender equality, inspires individuals to live healthy lives, and fosters tolerance between people and communities, contributing to a more peaceful and promising future.¹⁴

UNESCO states that 250 million children were out of school in 2023 globally due to several reasons amongst which poverty and gender disparities are the primary ones.¹⁵ Considering the importance of education, the UN has made it one of its primary targets under SDG number 4 to ensure inclusive education that is child, disability, gender-sensitive and provides safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments.

The Prophet (ﷺ) termed education compulsory for all men and women and was the first one to do so in the history of mankind. So, he gave the world the concept of “Education for all” at that time.

Focus on Women’s Education

Around the globe, 119 million girls are out of school due to many reasons such as child labour, early marriage, and poverty. Poor families mostly prefer boys’ education over girls’ education. Even in this modern world, nations are not able to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. This goal ensures equitable quality of education and inclusive education and promotes opportunities for lifelong learning.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) wanted to educate the women of society. He took every possible measure for it. Even a special day was set in a week for their education. Even women were allowed to attend the congregational and Friday prayers and listen to the sermons of the Prophet (ﷺ). Bāb-ul-Nisā (the Door of Women) is still there in the Mosque of the Prophet (ﷺ). It clearly shows that only women could enter it through this door. The knowledge gate was opened for the women folk through the wives of the Messenger of Allah in Madinah. They were allowed to acquire knowledge as the mammoth duty of preparing the next generation had to befall them. Furthermore, these women are half of the human race and mankind is indebted to them for its growth and even survival.

The Prophet (ﷺ) instructed the believers to teach them some of the Qur’ānic surahs, such as Ayat-ul-Kursī and Sūrah al-Nūr, as a core syllabus. He also tasked his wives with the assignment of transferring knowledge to the women folk in the society. About Hz ‘Āyesha (RA), the Prophet (ﷺ) has instructed the believers to learn half of the religion from Humairah (Hazrat ‘Āyesha) while another narration speaks about her two-thirds of Islamic knowledge. Female hadith experts like Hz ‘Āyesha (RA) and Hz Umm-e-Salma (RA) appeared in the Muslim community due to their special efforts for the education of women in a Muslim society.

Therefore, it is deemed as the right of a Muslim woman to acquire knowledge. It is, in reality, an outstanding contribution that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) made to the cause of female education in the world. Being the benefactor of women, they were given their due right to education. It signifies his progressive, and wise approach because it is an undeniable truth that they are a significant second part of human life. The human race is grateful to the Prophet (ﷺ)’s creative educational approach.

Education as the Responsibility of the Heads of Families

Parents are responsible for educating and grooming their families (wives and children) because they are the heads of their families. Allah Almighty says in the Qur’ān:

“Save yourselves and your family from the hell fire.”¹⁶

Hz ‘Alī (RA) has explained this verse in the following way:

“Educate yourselves and your family members about good manners.”¹⁷

The responsibility of a father is described in the following ḥadīth:

“A father cannot give his son a better gift than good grooming.”¹⁸

The above-mentioned ḥadīth indicates that this is the responsibility of parents to educate their children. The Prophet (ﷺ) has strictly instructed the parents to take up the responsibility of grooming and looking after their children.

The Spread of Knowledge as the Responsibility of a Special Group

The Qur’ān says:

“There should be a group of people amongst you to invite others to good things and stop them from the wrong.”¹⁹

The Prophet (ﷺ) assigned this duty of spreading knowledge to a special group of believers in a Muslim society. They must educate people all the time. This is a new concept given to the world by the Prophet (ﷺ).

More Importance for the Acquisition of Knowledge than Additional Worship

The acquisition of knowledge was once declared by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as more important than the additional worship of God. It is clear from the ḥadīth declaring a learned person superior to a devoted worshipper of God. So, a beautiful balance was developed by him between material and spiritual dimensions. Muslims are ordered to seek knowledge for a better life in this world and a happier one in the next.

It was a wise and forward-looking approach of the Prophet (ﷺ) to award more value to knowledge acquisition than additional *‘ibādah* (worship) of Allah.

Appreciation as an Important Tool

Appreciation has a vital role in the dissemination of knowledge as it nurtures motivation, promotes collaboration, and fosters a sense of community. The act of appreciation in the spreading of knowledge acts as a form of positive reinforcement. This positive reinforcement by recognizing individuals encourages idea sharing, leading to a better learning environment. As mentioned in Bandura’s Social Learning Theory in 1977, reinforcement or appreciation encourages people to exchange knowledge with one another.²⁰

Appreciation was focused on by the Prophet (ﷺ) because it was a significant tool for arousing people to acquire knowledge. He was generous in appreciating people for their talents and character. Various titles were conferred on the companions by him such as “Amīn-ul-Ummah” on Hz Abū ‘Ubaidah Bin Al-Jarrah (RA), “Saif Ullah” on Hz Khālīd Bin Walīd (RA), “Asad Ullah” on Hz ‘Alī (RA), “Ghanī” on Hz Usmān Bin ‘Affān (RA), “Ṣiddīque” on Hz Abū Bakr (RA), and “Fārūq” on Hz ‘Umar (RA) etc.

This was an innovative approach the Prophet (ﷺ) adopted for motivating and appreciating his companions. This motivational approach was effective because it affected them so much that everyone was ready to sacrifice even themselves for the sake of Islam and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). This is a testament to his success in the academic revolution which caused a huge change in world history. Educators should adopt such approaches to motivate the young generation to do wonders in life.

Pledges as a Strategy

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) utilized pledges as a strategy to enable his followers to follow his instructions. It was a novel idea introduced by him in education. The pledges of ‘Aqabah which were taken from the pilgrims of Madinah are an outstanding instance. These pledges forced the helpers of Madinah to follow the Messenger (ﷺ) under all circumstances. They were also supposed to invest money for the sake of Islam in poverty and plenty. They were to remove evil. They had to fear the censure of none in the way of Allah and defend the Prophet (ﷺ) in need.²¹

Moreover, during the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the Pledge of Rizwān was taken from fourteen hundred companions when the rumour about the murder of Hz Usmān (RA) came to the Prophet (ﷺ).²² This is another example of applying a pledge as a tool.

So, the Prophet (ﷺ) introduced a new way to enable his followers/students to follow good things and avoid the bad ones. This displays the creativity and novelty of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in the field of education.

Bond of Brotherhood

The Prophet (ﷺ) realized the pressing need to motivate his followers to cooperate soon after migrating to Madinah from Makkah as the Muhājirīn (emigrants) needed every kind of help. The companions were gathered for this purpose and a bond of brotherhood was established between the helpers of Madinah and the emigrants of Makkah. One helper and one emigrant were declared as brothers. The helper was expected to share with and support him as much as he could. The purpose was to enable the emigrants to settle down in the city of Madinah easily. The immediate impact was that the Makkans were brought closer to the Madinites. Consequently, a collaboration-based society developed and the Anṣār (helpers) were always enthusiastic to share all their belongings with their brothers.

Undoubtedly, this novel idea of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) united the Muslims of Makkah and Madinah in a strong bond. So, he was successful in infusing a new spirit of sacrifice among his followers. They were always prepared to cooperate and such a conducive environment was created where everyone was willing to work and learn.²³

Meritocracy

Selection based on merit is important for establishing fairness, equality, and efficiency in organizational and academic environments. Merit-based selection prioritizes qualification, accomplishments, and expertise, which guarantees that people chosen are the ones who are deserving and are chosen because of their skills and not because of Nepotism or personal bias. This method is in alignment with the United Nations' commitment to ensure equal chances and opportunities for all, as highlighted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which mentions the right of an individual to be selected on merit.²⁴

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) always stuck to the principle of merit whenever the envoys and teachers were selected. Hz Muṣ'ab Bin 'Umair (RA) was appointed as a teacher and sent with the new converts to the city of Madinah after the first pledge of 'Aqabah. He was guided to educate the people of Madinah about the fundamental teachings of Islam and to focus on the spread of Islam there. Secondly, he was expected to prepare the ground for the migration of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to the city of Madinah. It displays the wisdom of the Prophet (ﷺ) to select Hz Muṣ'ab Bin 'Umair (RA) because he was identical to the Prophet (ﷺ) in numerous ways, particularly in his approach to spreading Islam and appearances.²⁵

He proved his selection accurate when seventy-six people visited Makkah the following year to convert to Islam. They also took the 2nd Pledge of 'Aqabah at the hand of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). It was on this occasion that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked to migrate to Madinah along with his followers. So, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) followed the policy of merit, as the right man for the right job was selected on merit.

Furthermore, Hz Usmān Bin Maz'ūn (RA) was, before the first migration to Abyssinia, selected as the leader of a group comprising fifteen people even though there were Hz Usmān Bin 'Affān (RA), the Prophet's son-in-law, Hz Zubair Bin-al 'Awām (RA), the Prophet's first cousin and Hz Ruqayya (RA), the Prophet's daughter. It shows the wisdom of the Prophet in adhering to the rule of merit.²⁶ It is interesting to note that even close relatives were not picked up for this job.

Moreover, Hz Ja'ffar Bin Abi Ṭālib (RA), the Prophet's cousin and the brother of Hz 'Alī (RA), was appointed as the leader of a group of seventy-five people during the second

migration to Abyssinia. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not hesitate to select his relative if the criteria of merit were fulfilled by him. Hz Ja'ffar (RA) proved his selection as he represented Muslims in the court of Najāshī in a very good way. The deputation of the Quraish had to return empty-handed and with disappointment to the city of Makkah, as the Muslims were allowed to stay in Abyssinia.²⁷ These instances teach Muslims to adhere to meritocracy. Nepotism or favouritism must be shunned in the process of selection in life. So, the policy of merit was strictly adhered to by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), showing novelty and creativity in how to tackle any situation in life.

Analytical Thinking

Critical thinking is the core of problem-solving and effective decision-making as it allows people to examine, assess, and summarize information methodically, developing essential skills such as evaluation and analysis. It involves questioning, evaluating opposing perspectives, and making a rational decision/judgment based on evidence, facts, and reasoning rather than emotions, opinions, or bias. Critical thinking has been emphasized across various educational organizations, such as UNESCO which supports the promotion of critical thinking to nurture global understanding.²⁸ Research conducted in cognitive psychology points out the fact that individuals who have the skill of critical thinking are better at solving issues, navigating difficult situations, making responsible decisions, and avoiding mistakes and errors.²⁹ In brief, critical thinking is essential in not only academic success but all aspects of life.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) always tried to inculcate analytical thinking among his followers. The story of his migration to Madinah indicates his analytical thinking and creativity. He set out on this journey along with his close friend, Hazrat Abū Bakr (RA). His stay in the cave of *Thaur* for three days and nights is clear evidence of his analytical thinking because he was of the strong opinion that the search of the Quraish for him and his friend would end soon.³⁰

Numerous arrangements had also been made in advance for this journey like Hz 'Abdullah Bin Abī Bakr (RA)'s updating the Prophet (ﷺ) about the happenings in the city of Makkah or Hz 'Āmir Bin Fuhaira (RA)'s providing this group with fresh milk and removing the footprints of Hz 'Abdullah (RA) when he would visit the Prophet (ﷺ) and his father in the cave. 'Abdullah Bin Ureeqath, a non-Muslim hired by Hz Abū Bakr (RA) came with camels on the last day for them to leave for Madinah. Furthermore, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) took an unusual route to Madinah, to prevent the possible attempt of the enemies to pursue and apprehend them. It indicates a forward-looking approach and analytical thinking of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Moreover, the Treaty of Hudaibiya is also a fascinating instance of the farsightedness and analytical thinking of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) when he agreed to some of the unacceptable terms and conditions of this treaty. This is an undeniable fact that this treaty seemed to be against the interests of the Muslim community. Even a companion was not willing to accept these terms. Later, such terms of the treaty emerged to be a blessing in disguise for the Muslims.³¹ So the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has taught his followers to be analytical in thinking and creative. He showed them how to be forward-looking in their approach.

Furthermore, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) motivated his companions to donate on the occasion of the Tabūk expedition and the purpose was to cope with the challenges of the Muslims. Liberal donations came from the side of the companions and the donated items heaped up like a mountain. Hz Abū Bakr (RA) donated all he had at home, Hz 'Umar (RA) gave half of his belongings while Hz Abū 'Aqīl Anṣārī (RA), a poor helper, donated what he had earned as his wages comprising a few kilo dates. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) applied a unique approach by honouring his wages when he kept these dates on the zenith of the heap. Thus, Hz Abū 'Aqīl Anṣārī (RA) was respected and honoured. This was a creative

approach of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to value the contribution of his followers.³² It shows the analytical thinking, creativity, and novelty of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) while tackling a variety of situations in life. So, learners were educated to become creative, analytical, and novel in their thoughts and actions.

A Distinctive Pedagogical Style

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is an outstanding instance for all the people in the world. He was an educator par excellence because of his peerless pedagogical style. He did not borrow it from anyone. He had an amazing grip over his language on account of his eloquence. His countenance was cheerful. He was precise, concise, and clear in instruction. The strongest moving force in his personality was his faith in his mission. The way of his presentation was impressive too.

Moreover, he answered all questions learners asked about human leadership and religion. Repeating a point thrice was his style if and when it was essential. He asked questions of learners who were forced to think. He also narrated stories to clarify various concepts and make the lesson interesting.

The demonstration method was, sometimes, applied to educate his learners/ companions practically. Once the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was asked about the method of ablution. Water was brought, and he practically demonstrated how to take an ablution. It was a marvellous pedagogy and Muslim educators can easily learn how to teach in a practical and interesting way.

Simplicity was a distinguishing feature in the pedagogy of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He used simple diction so that his learners could easily fathom him and take a great interest in his instruction. He also intermingled humour in his instruction so that people were always enthusiastic about listening to him.

He always encouraged his learners to question because he never minded even an unpleasant question. He never got angry or upset if an embarrassing question was asked. Rather, he would rectify gracefully and ask a thought-provoking question from that person. A young man once asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to allow him to indulge in an illegitimate conjugal relationship. The companions of the Messenger of Allah were startled at this undesirable situation and gazed at that man angrily. The Prophet (ﷺ) invited him to sit closer to him. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) asked him how he would react if a man aspired to have an illegal relationship with his mother, sister, or aunt. The young man passionately said that he would never allow it to happen. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) put his hand on his head and made a prayer for him.

The Prophet's command over his temper in such unpleasant situations is a marvellous example for modern educators. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked a pressing question from that young man, forced him to think, and gracefully convinced him to avoid such a diabolical activity.

Every appropriate pedagogical strategy was, sometimes, applied by him to bring about a clear understanding of his learners. Various strategies were utilized to make learners understand and make his sessions interesting and inclusive. The Prophet (ﷺ) once instructed Hz Mu'āz Bin Jabal (RA) how to teach:

“O Mu'āz! Make ease, do not cause trouble, give good news to the people, and do not alienate them. You are going to a community of the book who would ask you about the key to paradise. So, tell them that the key to paradise is the declaration of Shahādah (declaration of God's unity).”³³

The Value of Pen

A great value was awarded to pen by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). The importance of its use is unmatched in the history of mankind. The oldest tool for writing is pen without any doubt. Its importance can be comprehended from the very first revealed verse of the Qur'an:

“Read in the name of your bountiful lord who taught with the pen”³⁴

When the decision to bestow knowledge on man was taken by Allah Almighty, the pen was declared as the most suitable tool for the acquisition of knowledge. The world owes a lot to the usage of pen as far as the spread of knowledge is concerned. The function of all academic and non-academic institutions became possible because of it.

It is interesting to note that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) kept the writing materials (pen) in his custody even during the important events of life. Once he was followed by Surāqa Bin Mālīk trying to arrest him during the journey of the migration to Madinah. Surāqa wanted to win one hundred camels as a prize announced by the Quraysh for the capture of Hz Muhammad (ﷺ) dead or alive. Surāqa fell on the ground many a time by stumbling when he was riding his horse and got closer to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). It was realized by him that his intent to apprehend the Prophet (ﷺ) was not useful for him. So, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was requested to give a written pardon to Surāqa. The pardon was written by Hz ‘Āmir Bin Fuhairah (RA) at the order of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and handed over to him.³⁵ This event indicates the great value awarded to pen by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

Its significance is also described by the Qur’ān in the following way:

“By Noon and pen that it writes.”³⁶

The Prophet (ﷺ) wished to make the basic literacy skills (of writing, dictation, and reading) common among his people in the city of Madinah. For this purpose, a special regular department was established at the Porch (Ṣuffah). Hz ‘Ubādah Bin Ṣāmit (RA) was selected as HOD (Head of Department) here. Furthermore, Hz ‘Abdullah Bin Sa’īd Bin-al ‘Aās (RA) was also given the assignment of teaching the people of Madinah the basic literacy skills.³⁷ This is an outstanding contribution of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to award so much value to pen because it is necessary for the acquisition of literacy skills and education.

Specialization in the Branches of Knowledge

Many academic and professional fields have advanced significantly because of the specialization in the branches of knowledge. When individuals focus on specific areas of their respective interests, they can gain deep expertise on specific topics, leading to many progressions and discoveries. This especially applies to the fields of medicine, engineering, and computer science.³⁸

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had this realization and thus concentrated on preparing such a team that its members would be specialists in numerous fields of knowledge. The following companions were groomed by the Prophet (ﷺ) and excelled in their fields of interest. A few of them are mentioned below:

- Hz Ubai Bin Ka‘ab (RA) had a specialization in the field of Tajwīd and Qirā’at (recitation of the Qur’ān) as he was the best reciter of the Qur’ān.
- Hz ‘Alī (RA) was an excellent judge (Qāḍī) as he could decide the problems of people in an outstanding way.
- Hz ‘Abdullah Ibn-e-‘Abbās (RA) was an excellent interpreter of the Qur’ān after the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).
- Hz Abū Mūsā Ash‘arī (RA) was an expert in Islamic jurisprudence.
- Hz ‘Abdullah Ibn-e-Mas‘ūd (RA) was an expert of the Qur’ān.
- Hz Mu‘āz Bin Jabal (RA) had specialization in the knowledge of permissible and non-permissible things in Islam.
- Hz Zaid Bin Thābit (RA) had an outstanding knowledge of inheritance and the Qur’ān.

Such an excellent system was established by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that all the needs of the Muslim community in the city of Madinah were fulfilled in a good way. A formidable

Muslim state comprising one million square miles was established and these experts were sent to various places of the Muslim world to train and groom people because they were trained by the Prophet (ﷺ).

This also shows the forward-looking vision of the Prophet (ﷺ) as his companion-cum learners were prepared to have specialization in different fields of knowledge. The concept of specialization in various fields has been realized by the world even today. It shows the novelty and creativity of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) showcased by him fourteen hundred years ago.

Planning for spreading Knowledge

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) focused on spreading knowledge in the Muslim world in particular and the whole world in general. He planned in two ways to achieve his objective: the long-term planning and the short-term planning. Let us discuss the short-term planning first:

- **Short Term Planning**

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) made two types of strategies to surmount the monster of illiteracy in the peninsula of Arabia. He aimed to eradicate it as soon as possible. So immediate measures were taken.

People visited the city of Madinah and would stay there for twenty to thirty days. They would learn the basic teachings of Islam from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Then they would go back to their tribes and enlighten their people about the fundamentals of Islam. For instance, Hz Mālik Bin-Al Ḥuwairth (RA) had spent approximately twenty days in the city of Madinah and learned the basics of Islam. He was instructed by the Messenger of Islam (ﷺ) to return to his family, educate it about what he has learned, and pray as he had seen the Prophet (ﷺ) pray.

In this way, once, a group of thirteen people came to Madinah from Bahrah (a place in Yemen). When they visited Madinah, they were welcomed by Hz Miqdād Bin ‘Amar (RA), who had been assigned the responsibility of lodging them in his house. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) taught them the fundamentals of Islam. When they were about to depart, they were provided with the essentials of the journey and were seen off.³⁹

Other delegations also visited Madinah from places like Farwa, ‘Āmir, and Khalwan. These guests met the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). They learned the basic teachings of Islam and returned to their native places to educate their people about the religion of Islam.

- **Long Term Planning**

Long-term planning was also formulated by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for the spreading of knowledge. A regular institution was established in Ṣuffah where people were educated and groomed by him and his appointed teachers. Foreigners were encouraged to visit Madinah for the acquisition of knowledge. The preachers of Islam were instructed to invite people to migrate to the city of Madinah. So, people from the peninsula of Arabia came to Madinah, for instance, Hz Abū Mūsā Ash‘arī (RA) brought approximately eighty people to the city of Madinah.⁴⁰

It gave a concept to the world that the visits of international students to a country for the sake of education are a great source of revenue as the U.S.A generated \$ 50 million from International Students in 2023-2024 only.⁴¹ It also shows a novel and creative approach of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in education because the world came to do what he had instructed his followers to do.

When people from numerous parts of the world entered the fold of Islam after the expansion of the Muslim state, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) realized the pressing need to educate the new converts. So, teachers and delegates were sent to various places for the education of the people. They were deputed at the request of the

converts. The Prophet (ﷺ) was also requested by the People of Udhāl and Qāra for teachers. Six people, including Hz Murthid Bin Murthid (RA), were sent to educate and teach them the Qur'ān.⁴²

Hz 'Alī (RA) says that a delegation from Yemen asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to depute a few teachers to enlighten them about the teachings of Islam, the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), and give verdicts on their issues by the Book of Allah. So, Hz 'Alī (RA) was directed to go with them. The Prophet (ﷺ) was informed by Hz 'Alī (RA) that these people do not use intellect and such strange questions would be brought to him that he might not answer. Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) encouraged him by striking his hand on his chest "Alī! Go and Allah will guide and bless you with stability." Then, he never felt any doubt about resolving issues.⁴³

Likewise, Hz Mu'āz (RA) and Hz 'Amr Bin Ḥazam (RA) were two notable companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). They were sent to the people of Yemen. They were directed to teach the Qur'ān and Sunnah. They were also supposed to collect revenues from them.

Teachers with Soldiers

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) thought it so essential to increase the literacy rate among people that teachers were sent with soldiers even during military expeditions. This was a novel idea. His basic aim was to educate them quickly. Therefore, every possible measure was taken to do so. These soldiers would fight on one side while the journey of education was also pursued and knowledge was acquired on the other side.⁴⁴

A remarkable vision, planning, and implementation tactics were utilized by the Prophet (ﷺ). The world came to know how to use every possible means to spread and accelerate the literacy rate in society. He was triumphant in the education of his people in a brisk way. The journey of education went on even after the death of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Hz 'Umar (RA), the 2nd caliph of Islam, also concentrated on the education of the people. Hz 'Ammār (RA) and Hz 'Abdullah Bin Mas'ūd (RA) were sent to Kūfa as teachers during his rule. Hz 'Imran Bin Ḥasnain (RA) was sent as a teacher to Baṣrah. Hz 'Ubādah (RA), Hz Mu'āz (RA), and Hz Abū Dardah (RA) were sent to Hims, Palestine, and Damascus respectively. Once Hz Abū Mūsā Ash'ārī (RA) was sent as the governor of Baṣrah but was also tasked with an additional assignment to oversee education there. He rendered remarkable services to the cause of education.

The companions and successors of the Prophet (ﷺ) were particular to follow his instructions for the spread of knowledge and translated his vision into a reality efficiently and effectively. Consequently, education was made a valuable but common commodity in the Muslim community in a short period.

Teacher as a Leader

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) groomed his companions in Makkah and Madinah. They were encouraged to survive in hostile circumstances and thus became role models for others. They led people from the front in Madinah. They proved themselves outstanding examples for others. So, his companions became teachers and leaders simultaneously. They followed the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who himself played the role of a teacher-cum-leader. So, the concept of a teacher as a leader was given to the world by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

Co-curricular activities in Education

Extracurricular activities play a wonderful role in the development of students as they allow academic learning alongside the development of skills. They also allow success in professional and personal life. Each extracurricular activity, from sports to debates, nurtures critical life skills which include collaboration, problem-solving, communication, time management, etc.⁴⁵

Co-curricular activities also develop social connections and emotional intelligence, allowing students to solve any complex social scenario in the future. Additionally, research highlights those extracurricular activities increase academic engagement and as a result reduce dropout rates.⁴⁶

Furthermore, studies conducted by UNESCO stress the importance of a well-rounded education for the holistic development of students. This engagement in non-academic activities develops creativity, critical thinking, and social responsibility.⁴⁷

The Prophet (ﷺ) was a teacher and leader par excellence, as he knew the significance of co-curricular activities in the holistic education of learners. So, he introduced these activities in education. The following measures were taken by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in this respect:

1. Humour

The Prophet (ﷺ) was a God-gifted teacher. He knew that the integration of humour in lessons is significant for the transfer of knowledge. So, he would have a chit-chat with learners. They would become comfortable and fresh. Sometimes, stories were narrated by him to enable them to enjoy funny moments. Sometimes, sessions of poetry were also held to amuse them, but nothing wrong was shared. Hz Abū Hurairah (RA) says,

The companions said to the Prophet (ﷺ), “O the messenger of Allah! You play with us (make fun with us).” The Prophet (ﷺ) would say, “I never say anything but the truth.”⁴⁸

Modern research highlights that humour in a classroom is a beneficial tool because it supports success in academics, improves management in the classroom, and constructs a positive relationship inside and outside the classroom.⁴⁹

2. Debates

Debate competitions play an outstanding role in the development of the whole personality of an individual learner. This is important for one's personal growth, communication skills, critical thinking, and research skills. Debate competitions were held by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for learners. Their communication and public speaking skills improved tremendously as they were groomed to be future global leaders. Once he delivered a sermon, Hz Abū Bakr (RA) and Hz ‘Umar (RA) were asked to speak to the people. Brief sermons were delivered by them. Then a long sermon was delivered by another person. Then Hz ‘Abdullah Bin Mas‘ūd (RA) was summoned to talk to the public and he spoke briefly. His brief speech was highly appreciated by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).⁵⁰

In this way, the Prophet (ﷺ) always motivated his learners to make the skill of public speaking better so that they would become excellent in their communication as they had to play the leadership role.

3. Poetry and Literature

A literary taste was inculcated among learners by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). In the mosque of Madinah, sessions were held for this purpose. He attended these sessions in which poetry was appreciated by him. Hz Jābir Bin ‘Abdullah (RA) reports that more than one hundred sittings were attended by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Poetic verses were recited by the companions and the time of *Jāhiliyah* (ignorance) was discussed. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would remain silent and sometimes, would smile on such occasions.

The development of literary taste among learners carries great significance as it enhances analytical thinking skills, increases empathy, improves the ability to speak, broadens cultural awareness, deepens the understating of human experience, and develops appreciation of language.⁵¹

4. Races

Track and field races have physical and personal advantages. They enhance physical fitness

by strengthening heart health, developing muscle strength, and contributing to one's overall well-being.⁵² Races also contribute to the personality development of individuals by nurturing essential skills such as discipline, goal setting, consistency, hard work, etc.⁵³ They also help build resilience and self-confidence, especially when individuals encounter challenges or losses.⁵⁴ Racing inaugurates collaboration and communication skills in individuals, creating an environment of teamwork and a sense of community. This specifically applies to relay events where racers have to work together and support each other to win.⁵⁵ So, races are not just a means of physical growth or a way of profile building but also act as means of personality growth.

That is why physical education is significant in Islam as it improves health, builds discipline, and promotes Islamic values. The Prophet (ﷺ) was aware of the significance of races and physical activities in holistic education. Races were organized by him. Rather, he also took part in a race with Hz 'Āyesha (RA). Hz 'Abdullah Bin Hāris (RA) narrates a story of a race arranged by the Prophet (ﷺ) among young people that once the Prophet (ﷺ) set Abdullah, Ubaidullah, and Kathīr Bin-al-Aaṣ in a line and asked them for a race. He also assured them of a prize for the winner.⁵⁶

It shows that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) knew the advantages of physical activities because they are very advantageous for the strength and development of a man's body and soul. It exhibits his creative and innovative approach to holistic education.

5. Wrestling

Wrestling brings physical fitness, mental toughness, sportsmanship, self-defence, and athleticism to an individual. It also controls aggressiveness and develops social skills.⁵⁷ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) liked this sport so much that it became his favourite sport. He even participated in it. Rikana was a well-known wrestler during the age of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). And he was a winner against Rikana in this sport three times.

It demonstrates the multifaceted aspects of the Prophet's life and his broad vision. That is why he is an outstanding role model for all the people as far as creativity and innovative approach in education is concerned.

6. Archery, Swimming and Horse-Riding

Horse-riding, archery, and swimming are not just entertaining sports but are also means to improve physical and mental health, while nurturing personality. Horseback riding has several physical benefits like improving cardiovascular health, balance, body rhythm, connectivity, and coordination. It can also be a therapeutic activity, contributing positively to man's mental health.⁵⁸

Archery can improve mental health and increase our focus by stressing upon accuracy, attentiveness and discipline. This sport is also acknowledged for the promotion of patience as individuals only gain accuracy in hitting targets over time.⁵⁹

Similarly, as highlighted by research conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), swimming also has several physical and mental benefits. It's not only good for man developing muscle strength and enhancing muscle flexibility, but it also reduces mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, it is also recognized as a sport with low injury rates compared to field sports.⁶⁰

The advantages of essential skills cannot be denied even in the modern world. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would always encourage his companions to learn all of them as these are the skills that save life. He says in a ḥadīth:

“Teach your children swimming, archery, and horse riding.”⁶¹

Hz Sa'ad Bin Abī Waqāṣ (RA) narrates a ḥadīth:

“It is obligatory for you to learn archery because this is the best sport for you.”⁶²

An official order was issued by Hz ‘Umar (RA) during his rule to teach children swimming and archery, and how to jump on the backs of running horses. It is worth mentioning that a beautiful balance was created between important affairs of life and recreational activities by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). It was aptly said by him as well:

“Dedicate so much time to these permissible sports as there is salt in a meal.”⁶³

Imām Ghazālī, the well-known educationist-cum philosopher of the Muslim world, says that sparing some time for a child to play is reasonable because he would be refreshed after his return from school, and it will diminish his fatigue and boredom from his studies.

The mental, emotional, and physical development of children is possible only through co-curricular activities so that they may get trained to cope with the challenges of life. So, it was on account of the novelty, creativity, and critical thinking of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that an educational revolution was brought about by him in a quick way. New ideas were introduced to the world how to revolutionize society through education. He must be followed by teachers and leaders would today for integrating creativity and novelty in education.

Conclusion

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was, undoubtedly, the most outstanding teacher of all time. He was ahead of all times as he was divinely blessed to be so. He thought about how to revolutionize his people as they needed this drastic change miserably. He felt that only through education, a permanent change would be affected. So, he first focused on the development and spread of literacy skills among people. He adopted various techniques to achieve this purpose like motivation and appreciation as the basic tools to arouse them to the acquisition of knowledge.

Then he concentrated on the ways to introduce creativity and novelty in the field of education. He utilized untraditional methods of teaching and grooming. He awarded the greatest respect to the people of knowledge who were the teachers. The cream of the nation was encouraged to enthusiastically adopt teaching as the most respectable profession. He even declared himself as a teacher. He picked up the cream of his people and tasked them to acquire and spread knowledge. The Qur’ān tremendously helped him in spreading knowledge in society.

He declared education as compulsory for all men and women in the society. Long and short-term planning was formulated to achieve a maximum literacy rate in society. The heads of the families were supposed to educate their near and dear ones. The neighbours were also tasked to educate all and sundry in their surroundings. Even a special group of people was given the task of educating people all the time.

New strategies were introduced by the Prophet (ﷺ) to give significance to the acquisition of knowledge. Even the concealment of knowledge was declared a punishable sin. The pen was declared the most valuable tool in society. And even a surah of the Qur’ān is named after the pen. The people having knowledge were declared as the most distinguished people in the society. Even critical thinking was encouraged by the Prophet (ﷺ) among his companions, and he adopted a distinctive style to achieve it. Furthermore, he encouraged learners to specialize in various fields of knowledge. He also focused on the introduction and incorporation of co-curricular activities like races, wrestling, horse-riding, archery, swimming, even debates, poetry, humour, etc, in the field of education so that learners would be prepared for various challenges of life holistically.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was successful in the transformation of his people into the role of global leadership. Then the world was stunned to see the impact of the Prophet’s creative and innovative measures for the sake of his people’s education. And a permanent, indelible mark was left on the history of mankind. Muslims consequently excelled other nations of the world in all fields of life.

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