Pedagogical strategies for religious education

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Abstract

Religious education is a dire need of the hour for the development of morals, culture, and spirit within a learner and society as a whole. Appropriate pedagogical strategies for religious education include the use of a variety of approaches to engage the students and make the learning more meaningful and lifelong by incorporating critical thinking, reasoning, interest, and self-reflection. This article highlights various educational approaches, including storytelling, experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, and discussion-based approaches, as well as the incorporation of technology and interfaith dialogue. This study followed a qualitative content analysis research approach, using secondary data such as books, articles and research papers. This study examines how students react to the impact of instructional tactics intended to increase engagement, comprehension, and personal reflection. This article emphasizes how interactive and effective teaching approaches, such as recitation, memorization, questioning, active discussions, and problem-solving activities, promote understanding and personal connection to religious beliefs, values, and practices. Effective pedagogical techniques promote deeper understanding involvement and contextual knowledge, resulting in longer retention of learning experiences. The use of technology, such as digital resources and multimedia information, provides new and engaging ways to improve accessibility, relatability, and affordability. Furthermore, interfaith conversation encourages mutual tolerance and broadens ideas on religious diversity, which ensures religious harmony.

This study indicates that effective religious education requires a combination of conventional and modern pedagogical methodologies, each tailored to the distinct and diverse needs of the learners.

Keywords: pedagogical strategies, modern religious pedagogy, ICT-based religious education, religious educational pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

The term pedagogy refers to the art and science of teaching. Pedagogical strategies cover all artistic and scientific endeavors of the teacher which makes the teaching-learning process function smoothly, it includes all the methods, maxims, skills, applied tools, techniques, and tactics of the teacher to make the teaching-learning process creative, effective, and interesting. Religious education refers to the process of learning about different religions, including their beliefs, values, practices, etc.Religious education is about transferring religious knowledge and equipping students with critical skills needed to understand and respond to complex societal issues **(Hadi, et.al. 2019).** Religious education tends to develop not only for the spiritual world but for materialistic life too.It aims at the complete development of the individual holistically. Religion is not only confined to the spirit and the Almighty rather it is a complete way of life.In an era of rapid globalization and increasing religious pluralism, the role of Religious Education (RE) in schools is more critical than ever. As societies become increasingly diverse, educators must navigate the complex terrain of teaching religion in a way that respects both the variety of religious beliefs and the secular principles of public education **(Baker, A & Martin, S. 2025).**

Objectives of the study

- To explore the prevailing pedagogical strategies for religious education.
- To investigate the relevance of ICT in imparting religious education.
- To explore modern methods of providing religious education.

Theoretical Background of the study

Religious education is not a new phenomenon but its methods differ significantly from then to now. In ancient times religious instructions were imparted orally there were no formally structured schools or religious institutions, presently religious education is being provided in formal schools and institutions. Religious education (RE) has traditionally been about transmitting religious knowledge—most commonly about the doctrines, rituals, and history of a particular faith tradition. In many cases, RE was viewed as the moral foundation for guiding young people in society, especially in religious communities. However, the landscape of religious education has dramatically shifted with increasing globalization, immigration, and secularization, which have resulted in more culturally and religiously diverse student populations in public schools. This diversification challenges the traditional methods of RE and raises essential questions about its role and purpose in the 21st century **(Baker, A & Martin, S. 2025).** The methods of religious education must evolve as per the needs of society to manifest the best in man. The transformation of Islamic education towards global competence is not only academically relevant but also crucial in building a progressive and inclusive Muslim generation **(Sodikin. 2025).**

Significance of the study

Pedagogical strategies for religious education are essential for fostering meaningful engagement, critical thinking, and personal reflection among learners. Religious education aims not only to inform but also to transform the individual holistically. Religious education prepares the individual to succeed in both the material and spiritual world by inculcating the following values; fear of God, thankfulness, patience, generosity, justice, forgiveness, respect for others, righteousness, goodness, truthfulness, beauty, sound moral character, kindness, good manners, pure intentions, self-governance, self-control, striving for excellence, wisdom, self-discipline, intellectual honesty, integrity, fear of punishment, hopeful for reward.

To develop the above-mentioned values or qualities a teacher needs effective instructional methods. They are as follows:

Methods of teaching

Ideal-self demonstration: Teachers can potentially inculcate many religious etiquettes among their students by demonstrating and reflecting the moral and religious values through his/her sound personality, such as truthfulness, love, cooperation, integrity, the dignity of others, honesty, punctuality, brotherhood, unity, etc. Teachers are role models for students, usually, students behave like their ideal teacher. It is the best indirect method of imparting religious education.

The expository method: The expository method is a way of teaching that ensures the explanation of religious concepts, making them as clear and coherent as possible. In this method, facts, doctrines, or teachings are presented in a direct manner using lectures, discussions, or readings. It ensures that students become deeply knowledgeable in religious topics, as it seeks to provide clear definitions, detailed explanations, and logical analysis. The expository method is very useful in religious education, especially when teaching scripture, theological concepts, or ethical principles.

Memorization method: In this method, the teacher organizes and presents the content systematically and logically and helps students learn the religious texts through cramming and rote memorization. Drill and practice improve longer retention and ability to recall. Through this method, students learn the Quran or religious text by heart.

Revision and repetition method: The revision and repetition method is an important technique for religious education, especially for the reinforcement of key teachings, scriptures, and moral principles. It involves revisiting content multiple times to ensure that learners not only memorize it but also understand and internalize it deeply.

Question-answer method: The Islamic knowledge acquisition system is not passive; it actively involves both the seeker and the educator. The significance of posing questions in the quest for knowledge is appreciated. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Knowledge is a treasure, and its key is questioning. So, ask, may Allah have mercy on you, for in it four will be rewarded: the inquirer, the teacher, the listener, and the one who loves them." He also said, "It is not appropriate for the scholar to remain silent about his knowledge, nor is it appropriate for the ignorant to remain quiet about his ignorance." Allah, Glorified and Exalted, said: ﴿ فَسْـَٔلُوٓا أَهْلَ ٱلذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾—"So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know." Questioning is an essential tool for learning, emphasizing the spiritual and intellectual growth, further strengthening the bonds of knowledge within the community **(Rahman, M. (2025)**.

Explanation method: This approach attempts to make the material simpler and easier to understand by having the teacher explain the idea with appropriate, suitable, and relevant examples. Using logically ordered resources, examples, arguments, evidence, experiences, or observations, provide a thorough explanation, interpretation, and illustration that eliminates all possibility of misunderstandings.

Debate and Discussion method: Instructors can organize open debate and discussions to encourage cooperation, tolerance, critical thinking, empathy, and self-reflection. Instructors can use any subject or circumstance to encourage their students to study religious literature, discuss moral dilemmas, and think about how religious teachings relate to contemporary society. Discussions are crucial for promoting mental activity, improving fluency and ease of communication, clearer thinking, and practicing presenting one's thoughts and facts. According to **Vargo (2012)**, the results of several previous studies have revealed that using debate to teach allows students to take responsibility for their own learning since it grants the students the opportunity to prepare and present their work to other fellow students **(Fitri, M. 2021).**

Narration method: Narration is an indispensable device for communicating knowledge **(Siddiqui, M.1999)**. The skill of narration enables the teacher to come very close to the hearts of the students and thereby attract their undivided attention. i.e. demolition of idols at House of Kaaba by Prophet Abraham.

Observation method: Observation was considered a significant method for teaching and learning, particularly in contemporary research and instructional strategies. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) instructed his followers to observe him to acquire various religious and social abilities, enabling them to conduct these practices optimally in the future. He said, "Pray as you observe me praying*"***(Rahman, M. 2025)**. It is rightly believed that observation under the careful guidance of a teacher proves very effective in the process of learning, and facts, skills, and behavior are learned and retained for a longer period. Observation or direct experience or visits to actual places, say a monument, a fort, or a religious institution, etc. provide ample opportunities for students to see, hear, examine, gather data, and ask questions.

Experiential Learning

This type of learning encourages active participation and personal involvement. The approaches under this strategy include field trips to places of worship, role-playing religious rituals, and interactive storytelling. This strategy immerses students in religious practices and experiences so that educators help them gain a deeper understanding beyond mere theoretical knowledge of beliefs and traditions.

Project method: in this method, students are set free to do self-directed learning. In which a teacher designs a project keeping in mind the objectives of the theme i.e. The teacher makes the different groups of students and assigns them to do a survey in their neighborhood and make a list of what festivals they celebrate. What customs and traditions do they follow? What kind of food do they eat? What qualities do they give importance to? etc. students can take pictures if they allow. And asked students to present the findings in groups, find out the differences and similarities between different religions and critically analyze it. Through this method, students can come up with diverse perspectives, concrete experiences, and an understanding of different religions.

Story-telling method:

Stories are a very effective tool in religious education. Using this strategy, a teacher can give real-life episodes, or stories about prophets, saints, or religious figures. Narratives from sacred texts, biographies of religious figures, and personal testimonies can make abstract religious concepts concrete. Teachers can integrate storytelling through drama, multimedia presentations, or student-created narratives to deepen engagement. This art of story-telling aims to present to students through the medium of speech clear vivid, interesting ordered sequences of events in such a way that their minds reconstruct these happenings and they live in their imaginations and take life lessons from such stories (Agarwal, J.C. 2001). i.e Al-Baqarah, Al-Imran, Al-Maidah, Yunus, Hud, Al-Kahfi, Yusuf, Maryam, Noah and Luqman.

Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based learning involves asking students questions and seeking answers based on research and discussion. The instructor is a facilitator who provides the student's direction in research of religious texts, ethical dilemmas, and historical contexts.

Comparative method

A comparative approach to RE goes beyond a narrow focus on a particular tradition. By comparing religious beliefs, practices, and ethical systems from around the world, students gain a broader understanding of the commonalities and differences between religions. This approach also emphasizes the shared human concerns and questions that religions address, such as the nature of suffering, the meaning of life, and the search for truth.In a global context, the comparative approach allows students to explore how religion influences politics, culture, and economics in different regions of the world **(Baker, A & Martin, S. 2025).**

Critical Pedagogy: . Critical Pedagogy, first introduced by Paulo Freire, offers a learning framework that goes beyond conventional teaching experiences **(Fitriana 2017).** Critical Pedagogy aims to create an empowering learning environment, encouraging students to question, stimulating critical thinking, and deepening their understanding of the complex relationship between religious teachings and global social challenges. **(Tabrani 2014)** The significance of this integration lies in its ability to respond to the dynamics of the modern world and accommodate evolving contemporary issues. In the context of religious education, this becomes relevant as global issues such as interfaith conflicts, inequality, and human rights abuses demand urgent attention. By applying the principles of Critical Pedagogy, religious education can become a platform for developing students' critical thinking, facilitating open dialogue on complex issues, and motivating them to take positive action in building peace, justice, and respect for human rights. **(Mushodiq 2021).** Integration of critical pedagogy can result in a deeper understanding, reduced stereotypes, and the building of bridges of understanding between different faiths, creating an environment that supports cooperation and harmony**(Jasminto, J & Rofi'ah, S. 2024).**

Use of Technology and Multimedia

The integration of information technology in education has become increasingly critical in the digital era, particularly for enhancing pedagogical effectiveness. YouTube, as the world's most prominent video-sharing platform, has emerged as a significant educational tool across diverse disciplines, including Islamic Religious Education **(Muhammad, A. & et.al.. 2025)**.Multimedia tools, such as videos, audio recordings, interactive websites, and apps, enhance learning because religious teachings become more accessible and engaging. Multimedia methods enable educators to present stories and scriptures in dynamic ways that cater to different learning styles: auditory, visual, or kinesthetic. For instance, animated Prophetic stories can create a sense of resurrection in the ancient texts.The application of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR), can enhance the educational experience of students.32 Survey results revealed that 75% of young Muslims favored online learning platforms for accessibility and the opportunity to interact with varied content **(Rahman, M. 2025)**.

Active Participation and Service Learning

Service-learning interconnects religion and community service. Encouraging students to be involved in philanthropic activity, volunteer service, and justice initiatives enables them to implement the ideas that they would have learned in the class. This applied practice will also enable them to solidify ideas concerning compassion, sympathy, and social responsibility.

Dialogical Method:

Dialogical teaching promotes open discussions where students share their beliefs, ask questions, and engage in meaningful conversations. This dialogical method encourages a deeper exploration of religious ideas, helping students develop their perspectives while respecting diverse viewpoints. This method promotes better interpersonal relations and active learning.Effective interfaith dialogue fosters mutual respect, providing students with opportunities to hear different perspectives and challenge their own viewpoints. It also encourages collaboration rather than division, helping students understand that religious differences do not need to lead to conflict, but can instead be a source of enrichment and learning. **(Baker, A & Martin, S.2025).**

Differentiated Instruction method:

With the diversity in learning styles, differentiated instruction caters to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Group activities, individual projects, and adaptive assessments ensure that all students engage effectively with religious education, regardless of their preferred learning style. The method involves an inclusive setting that provides a supportive learning environment, where every student is challenged and engaged at levels best suited for spiritual and intellectual growth.

Community resource person: A community resource person for Religious Education is very essential in faith-based learning support because he provides guidance, resources, and expertise to the educator and students. They facilitate discussions on religious values, traditions, and ethics while promoting interfaith understanding and respect. Under their supervision teachers can organize workshops, lead study groups, and collaborate with religious institutions to enhance spiritual growth within the school and community(Dhand.H.2008).

Role play and dramatization: Problems in real life can be solved with this teaching method. Functioning knowledge and practical abilities are developed using the role-playing technique. It allows students to take on the role of stakeholders in a hypothetical scenario in the classroom. When students participate in a play role, the teacher chooses an incident that sheds light on the subject of study, assigns roles that are played out and ends with a reflection phase that serves to reinforce the

ideas presented. Students can examine their emotions, attitudes, values, and problem-solving techniques together using this approach. Teachers can give their students roles to play, such as that of an influential religious figure, administrator, educator, etc.These characters can be played to relive the legacy of their lives such as Hazrat Umar, Rabia Basri, Umayyad Caliph Umar bint Abdul Aziz, etc.

Maxims of Teaching Religious Education

Maxims convey the techniques that effective teachers use to help them achieve objectives, maintain student interest, and proceed systematically. Herbert Spencer is considered the father of teaching maxims **(K Raman, S.2024).**

Simple to Complex

While teaching religious education, it is crucial to begin with simple concepts before introducing more complex theological ideas. For instance, young learners should first understand basic moral values such as kindness, love, and honesty before going into deeper discussions about ethical dilemmas and theological doctrines. This way, students build a strong foundation that allows them to gradually grasp more profound spiritual teachings without feeling overwhelmed.

Known to Unknown

Effective teaching starts with familiar concepts and gradually introduces new knowledge. In religious education, this means connecting spiritual teachings to students' everyday experiences. For example, teachers can relate the idea of gratitude to common experiences like thanking parents, teachers, or friends before expanding the discussion to include gratitude towards God. By linking religious principles to what students already know, they can better understand and internalize new spiritual concepts.

Concrete to Abstract

It is best to start with concrete examples because abstract religious concepts are hard to understand. Stories, parables, and everyday experiences make the moral and spiritual lessons clearer before they go deeper into theological thought. For example, faith might be taught with the story of prophets, and saints teaching trust in God through a more relatable and familiar story before explaining the larger concept of faith in the unseen realities.

Whole to Parts

A holistic approach makes the students understand the overall scenario before diving into the details. Religious education involves explaining the entire story or concept for learners to grasp the essence before it is divided into particular teachings or lessons. For instance, teaching or revealing the five pillars of Islam such as Shahadah, salah, saum, zakat, and Hajj as a complete set of moral guidelines would allow the student to understand its overall purpose before going through each one of them separately.

Psychological to Logical

Students learn best when the pertinent emotional and mental readiness is considered before structured logical arguments are presented to them. In religious education, an appeal must first be made to their emotions, experiences, and personal reflections before getting into the explanations of doctrinal matters. For example, discussing love and forgiveness and making people experience it through storytelling can then make them logically understand theological principles like divine mercy and justice.

Analysis to Synthesis

In religious education, learning typically involves breaking down a complex teaching into smaller parts for easy analysis and later synthesizing those parts into a complete understanding. For example, when a student is reading through a religious

text, they might first look at the different verses, Surahs, important themes, and historical context before synthesizing it all together for a more spiritual understanding and applying it to their lives. This process allows for a deeper comprehension, enabling learners to integrate religious principles into different spheres of life.

Empirical to Rational

Religious education should begin with observable experiences, empirical, and then gradually lead into deeper reasoning and abstract understanding, rationality. Firstly, the teacher should provide concrete experiences about religious rituals, moral actions, and experiences of faith.. For example, the act of sharing food, stationery, and toys with siblings and friends can be proved as a bridge to familiarize with the concept of charity (Zakat). This model helps learners contextualize abstract thinking by making concrete relations with everyday lives.

Techniques of teaching

- Teaching should be systematic and must go step-by-step as per the intellectual capacity of students.
- Focusing student's attention on one concept at one time.
- Motivating the students for learning.
- Creating curiosity and drawing students' attention toward the lesson through innovative and diverse strategies.
- Presentation of the lesson using proper speech, easy language, and voice modulation.
- Analysis and evaluation of contents to check their comprehensive coverage.
- Summarize the concept in a nutshell.
- Examine the understanding of a topic just after completing it by raising questions or by taking up students' questions.
- Inculcate sound study habits i.e.start studying with Almighty's name.
- Proper seating arrangement.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of religious education depends on how the educators strategize pedagogy. To teach religious values, beliefs, and ethics in a way that not only helps to learn but also fosters faith, moral character, and spiritual development. It has been emphasized that the pedagogy needed for interreligious education ought to be learner-centered in order to engage actively and to stimulate genuine interest wherever this takes place **(Jackson, 2010)**.Through the use of a mix of storytelling, experiential learning, critical thinking, and interactive discussions, students are not merely passive recipients of information but rather active participants of learning. Religious education must facilitate direct experience and dialogue that builds awareness of diversity, not just the introduction of doctrine.Training teachers as facilitators of fair and reflective dialogue is also very important **(Puspawati, S & Arjana, I. 2025).** Open dialogue and interfaith discussions are ways of fostering religious tolerance and mutual respect in today's diverse and pluralistic society. The role of the teacher is not only to instruct but also to model the values taught, demonstrating faith, compassion, and integrity in interactions with students.Effective religious education goes beyond the classroom. It should inspire lifelong learning and spiritual growth, equipping students with the moral and ethical foundation needed to navigate life's challenges. By making religious teachings relevant to daily life, educators empower students to practice virtues such as kindness, honesty, and social responsibility in their communities.

Ultimately, religious education aims not only at providing information rather transformation of mind and soul. Using proper pedagogical techniques, the teachers can develop persons who do not only understand their faith but live it and promote a just, compassionate, and spiritually rich society.

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