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ACTIVE TEACHING METHODS: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES

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Abstract

Islamic education has always recognized spiritual and moral values as significant elements in developing a “balanced” human being. One way of demonstrating spiritual and moral concepts is through effective teaching methods that integrate and forefront these values. This article offers an investigation of how the authors’ teaching approaches integrate spiritual and moral values in tertiary/university curriculum subjects as part of the students’ spiritual and moral development.

Islam has always recognized the enormous value of education in integrating spiritual and moral values. Education from an Islamic perspective is a process of educating and training people mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally based on two main sources, namely the al-Qur’an and the as-Sunnah. Islamic education is a process of implementing an educational philosophy and translating it into reality to socialize and develop human beings. Teachers, as agents of knowledge that is transmitted through the curriculum and school life, may reinforce students’ values and behaviors by their professional and individual positions. They play a key role in shaping not only students’ intellect but also their spiritual and moral development.

Through various kinds of teaching activities, spiritual and moral concepts may be demonstrated in several different ways. However, in discussions of spirituality and moral values, there is the question of how teachers might organize such talk, learning and teaching methodology in the context of education in order to motivate and enhance learning outcomes for all students. Danielewicz (2001) writes:

Teaching is a complex and delicate act. It demands that teachers analyze the situation, consider the variables of students, texts, knowledge, abilities, and goals to formulate an approach to teaching, and then to carry it out—every day, minute to minute, within the ever-shifting context of the classroom. (9)
Danielewicz’s point of view gives rise to two significant questions: in what ways can spirituality and morality be manifested in educational systems, and, what are the challenges for promoting or enhancing educational options for students in relation to spiritual and moral values?

In the process of integrating students with moral and spiritual values, it is important for teachers to provide students with knowledge, as well as actively engage students in the process of knowledge generation. According to a transmissive perspective, effective teaching begins with a commitment to the content or subject matter. Therefore, teachers are regarded as transmitters of a given body of knowledge. McNamee (2007) states that traditional epistemological teaching-learning practices have formed education as “a technique or method for conveying knowledge” (314). Meanwhile, according to active teaching methods, learning is a knowledge construction process, where “both teacher and student engage in a process of making meaning together” (McNamee 2007, 314). The possible effects on learning from such both process are that student might actively take in knowledge and being challenged in ways that could open the opportunity for them to be in critical and reflexive. Therefore, they might know how to examine the moral and spiritual values that form their personal and professional positions, and the effects of these positions on their lives. Thus, how religious, spiritual, and moral matters are engaged with in teaching is likely to be very much influenced and shaped by how the students are taught.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES

Spirituality is defined in various ways. Some scholars seem to use “religion” and “spirituality” interchangeably; for other educational commentators, drawing a distinction between these two concepts is thought to be useful (Helmeke and Bischof 2002; West 2010). According to Walsh (2009) religion is perceived as an organized, institutionalized belief system, where people in that group practice a set of theological beliefs that encompass scriptures, teachings, rituals and religious ceremonies. The practice is often linked to a supernatural or transcendent power, that is, a belief about the existence of a higher power or God (Park 2005).

Spirituality, on the other hand, is distinguished as a more personal quest for the sacred. It includes “one’s values, beliefs, mission,
awareness, subjectivity, sense of purpose and direction, and a kind of striving toward something greater than oneself” (Frame 2003, 3). It is a sense of inner wholeness, a relationship with other people, and a way to be involved with the non-human environment (Stander et al. 1994). From this viewpoint, spirituality can be seen as being based on ethics and philosophy where a set of moral standards is used for living (Aponte 2002). Furthermore, according to authors like Richard and Bergin (1997) it is possible for one to be religious without being spiritual, and spiritual without being religious. This description suggests that spirituality may or may not include the belief in a deity or an association with formal religion. Therefore, spirituality might speak to the nature of an individuals’ relationship to the world, whether or not it is supernatural, or ascribe to theistic beliefs and practices.

Thus, spirituality constitutes a fundamental and pervasive aspect of human functioning called morality or moral values. According to Johnston et al. (1998) morality is the negotiation of judgments about what is good and bad, right and wrong, particularly when these judgments are made in social settings. Morality not only refers to the fundamental goals and values, lifestyles, and identity of an individual, but also entails the interpersonal aspects of life, which regulates one’s interactions, orders of relationships, and conflict solving methods (Walker 2004). In light of this perspective, morality can be perceived as intertwined with spiritual and religious values, where each of these aspects can influence each other.

In an Islamic worldview, spiritual and moral values are not sharply divided but both are recognized to be essential aspects of a faithful personality. Spiritual and moral values are closely related to Islamic religion in which both terms refer to a lifestyle that an individual Muslim adopts from the al-Qur’an and the al-Hadith (Francis, Sahin, and Al-Failakawi 2008). According to Jafari (1993) spiritual and moral elevation in Islam is caused by firmly holding to what God has ordered and abstaining from what God has forbidden. As a result, God-consciousness and self-awareness are interdependent. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective the integration of the material and the spiritual-moral life brings about an internal harmony that is the source of mental health and emotional stability. This dual consciousness regulates a Muslim individual’s psychological and physical needs as well as his or her overall personal and social conduct.

The link that exists in Islam between religion, spirituality and morality is reflected in the many passages in the Qur’an that refer to “those who believe” and “those who do good deeds” (e.g., in surah
2, verses 25 and surah 95, verses 6). The implications seem to be that for Muslims, faith and moral behavior are two sides of the same coin, that moral behavior presupposes faith and that faith is genuine only if it results in moral behavior (Halstead 2007; Khan 1987). In this term, morality is not outside of the Islamic religious context. In fact, morality in Islam is generally understood as a list of rules, duties, and responsibilities whose authority derives directly from the Qur'an and the Hadith (Halstead 2007; Hashim 1999). Hence, spirituality and moral values that are embedded in Islamic knowledge provide Muslims with positive guidance. These values equip them with the knowledge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and their task is to exercise their free will to choose which path to follow (Halstead 2004). Therefore, the approach to education that would appear to be compatible with Islamic principles is to put spiritual and moral values at the heart of the education process.

**ISLAMIC EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY**

The fundamental objective of education from an Islamic perspective is the balanced and integrated growth of individuals. Education in Islam represents an approach that aims to result in a perfect and balanced human being. The training of a person as a whole being should necessarily be aimed at his spiritual, intellectual, rational, and physical aspects, so as to encompass man’s dual nature of spirit and body (Hashim 1999). The spiritual faculty is known as the *ruh* (soul), *‘aql* (mind or intellect), *qalb* (emotion), or *nafs* (self), according to the ascribed functions (Hashim 1999). The *‘Aql* (mind or intellect), which is unique to human beings, elevates them above the rest of creation (The Qur’an, 95:4). The soul could be elevated to the noblest of positions but it could also be debased to the lowest of the low (The Qur’an, 89: 25; 95:5). Therefore, Muslim scholars at the First World Conference on Islamic Education in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 1977 summarized the Islamic education goal as follows:

> Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man’s spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Quran and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of his status as Khalifat Allah to whom
Allah has promised the authority of the universe; ... Education should promote in man the creative impulse to rule himself and the universe as a true servant, not by opposing and coming into conflict with Nature, but by understanding its laws and harnessing its forces for the growth of a personality that is in harmony with it. (Al-Attas 1979, 158)

This statement supports the belief that the ultimate goal of education in Islam is to produce a good person. A person is considered to be a good person when he acknowledges that he has been created to serve God and be His vicegerent. In order to achieve this goal, Islamic education should cater for the development of a balanced and harmonious character intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, based on belief and submission to God through effective instruction methods (i.e., both traditional and active methods). Teachers are responsible not only to provide knowledge to students (through traditional teaching methods), but also to encompass the responsibilities for the development of student potential and to the process of nurturing and guiding the student to the success in life (through the active teaching methods).

This is because Islamic teaching philosophy describes education as *tarbiyah* (Al-Attas 1979) with the meaning to grow and increase. In contemporary Arabic usage, the word *tarbiyah* is extensively used to denote education, but encompasses more than just sitting in a classroom and gaining knowledge from books. *Tarbiyah* (to grow, increase) refers to the development of individual potential and to the process of nurturing and guiding the child to the maturity (Al-Attas 1979; Halstead 2004). Moreover, one of the definitions of education, *ta’dib*, is a term that means to discipline and train the mind and soul “encompassing the spiritual and material life [of a person] that instils the quality of goodness that is sought after” (Al-Attas 1979, 1). According to this term (*ta’dib*), education is a process of educating the person concerned in the most proper and appropriate moral and spiritual behavior, and in the preparation of a positive attitude for the sake of righteous living. Educating (*ta’dib*) students toward proper moral and spiritual could be accomplished better when the teachers play roles as facilitators of learning through active teaching methods, rather than merely as transmitters of knowledge that is commonly done through the traditional teaching methods. As in Islam, the role of a teacher is not merely as *mu’allim* (a transmitter of knowledge), but also actively involved as a teacher-facilitator in guiding and developing students’ behavior, skill, moral, and spiritual. This supported what
Nasr (1987) explained; that a teacher in Islam has an ethical duty as a murabbi (a trainer of souls and personalities), that not only concerns with transmission of skills and knowledge, but also the inculcation of adab, which is the discipline of mind, body, and soul.

In other words, the combination of traditional and active teaching methods supports the Islamic education goal, which emphasizes the formation of moral and spiritual attitudes, skills, personalities, and a worldview that are consistent with the knowledge, skills, and appreciation of the al-Qur’an and the al-Hadith. Education is not merely a process whereby the teacher imparts knowledge that the students may or may not absorb; rather, it is also an interaction affecting and benefiting teacher and students equally, the former gaining merit for providing instruction and guidance; and the latter cultivating themselves through the development of their moral, spiritual and knowledge.

Knowledge (‘Ilm) is a sacred concept derived from God, its Ultimate Giver (Al-Attas 1990). Epistemologically, knowledge has been defined as “arrival in/of the soul of/at the meaning of a thing or an object” (Al-Attas 1990, 17). Meaning (Ma’na) here refers to its authentic or correct versa as determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as projected by the Qur’anic conceptual system (Al-Attas 1990). Thus, according to the Islamic worldview, the goal for the acquisition of knowledge must necessarily be “the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence” (Al-Attas 1990, 19).

From early on, Islam emphasized two types of knowledge, revealed and earthly (Nasr 1981). Revealed knowledge comes straight from God and earthly knowledge is to be discovered by human beings themselves. Islam considers both to be of vital importance and directs its followers, both men and women, to go and seek knowledge. The Qur’an is considered as the core of knowledge and is the major “power” or force to legitimize, produce, and operationalize truth in society (Nasr 1981). The Qur’an, therefore, is believed to be divine; it is the primary source of knowledge. While Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the perfect word of God, sacred and unchangeable, Muslims are also encouraged to seek for earthly knowledge, as it is very important for them to complement the knowledge revealed by God in the Qur’an in order to live productive and good lives in this world.

Despite knowledge (‘Ilm) being a sacred concept derived from God (Abdullah 1995; Al-Attas 1990), there is also earthly knowledge, such as ulum aqliyyah (rational science) that has to be actively discovered by human beings themselves (Al-Attas 1979, 1990; Nasr 1981). This indicates that Islam recognizes learning as an active process and
that, therefore, teachers should encourage and support learners to be active in knowledge construction.

In summary, knowledge (‘Ilm), either from God (revealed knowledge) or discovered by human beings themselves (earthly knowledge), plays a central role in the Muslim attitude toward life. In fact, Husain and Ashraf (1979) argue that: “... because God is the source of knowledge, by knowing more they [Muslims] felt they have been drawn near to God” (11). In other words, people require knowledge derived from human thinking to understand and interpret revealed knowledge. Therefore, Muslims are encouraged to seek both types knowledge—revealed knowledge and knowledge from human thinking. The importance of revealed knowledge in Islam points to the differences in how knowledge is acquired among Muslims, which contrasts with Western educational systems.

**METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

As mentioned in the previous section, the Islamic perspective of education maintains that true knowledge is the marriage of active virtue and knowledge, which requires both knowledge and practice. Abou-Hatab (1997) argues that higher cognitive skills can be developed through practice and training in critical analysis by exploring, discovering, and using new ideas and tasks. This suggests that methods of instruction in Islam can be divided into two dominant approaches (i.e., traditional and active teaching methods).

**Traditional Teaching Method**

Seeking knowledge has been an integral part of the Islamic tradition. The requirement for Muslims to seek knowledge is explicitly stated in a verse from the Prophet, “seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim” (in Al Ghazali 1997a, 8). Al-Ghazali (1997b) perceived that the pursuit of knowledge should be one’s highest priority, as “knowledge will not give you of itself unless you give it yourself utterly” (Al-Ghazali 1997a, 62). This provides the tenet that a good education is acquired by a motivated pursuit of knowledge. According to Islamic perspective, all knowledge comes from God. It is interpreted by the soul through its spiritual and physical faculties. In Islam, the concept of knowledge dominated over all aspects of an individual’s intellectual, spiritual, and social life. Thus, according to Islamic
education, teachers are responsible to educate students in all aspects of life, spirituality and intellectual, as instructed by the God. The history of education in the time of the Prophet and Islamic tradition shows that a variety of instructional methods such as *halaqah* (semi-circle), memorization, *kulliyyah* (lecture), *muhadathah* (discussion), dialogue, *mujadalah* (debate), experiences, and *rihlah* (travel) were used in order to achieve this education goal (Abdullah 1995; Ahmed 1968).

Memorization was a significant instructional method employed in traditional Islamic education, particularly in Qur’anic learning. In Islamic education, memorization of the Qur’an is generally considered the first step in understanding (not a substitute for it). The main objective of memorization was to ensure that the sacred knowledge (Qur’an) would be passed on in the exact form so that the same understanding, or meaning, would still be preserved in the future (Omar 1993). This traditional teaching method is essential in order to form the basis in the search for truth (*haqq*), proper action (*alim*), spirituality (*iman, nur and huda*), ethics (*ulama*), and wisdom (*hikma*). The teaching methods help teachers to develop effectively moral, spiritual and students’ behavior. In Islam, the formation of good character (spiritual and moral values) is concerned as the major purpose of education. It is to produce God-conscious (*taqwa*) men who obey God’s commands and avoid His prohibitions, and who would also be useful to the community.

**Active Teaching Method**

The second approach is the active Teaching method. In contrast to traditional teaching methods, teachers using active teaching approaches are not viewed as merely knowledge transmitters and skill models anymore but also as facilitators in the process of learning and in the development of a learning-conducive environment. The active teaching approach places students at the centre of the learning process (Estes 2004) and is generally intended to provide students with the autonomy to actively seek out and construct meaning from information and previous experience (Gibbs 1992; Harden and Crosby 2000).

Brandes and Ginnis (1986) offer the following characteristics of active learning:

1. The learner has full responsibility for her/his learning
2. Involvement and participation are necessary for learning
3. The relationship between learners is equal, promoting growth and development
4. The teacher becomes a facilitator and resource person
5. The learner experiences confluence in his education (affective and cognitive domains flow together)
6. The learner sees him/herself differently as a result of the learning experience.

Similarly, Islamic philosophy also emphasizes the importance of adopting active teaching methods that are suited to a learner’s ability, level of experience, and educational needs. The concepts of education in Islam (i.e., tarbiyah, ta’lim, and ta’dib) are interrelated and support both traditional and active teaching methods. Islamic education is concerned not only with the instruction and training of the mind by the transmitting of knowledge (ta’lim), but also with the spiritual education and refinement of the students’ whole being (tarbiyah and ta’dib).

Active methods of teaching were adopted into Islamic education tradition and these include observation and experimentation, reason and reflection, problem solving, dialogue, discussion, application, independent learning, and project-based learning (Abdullah 1994; Abdullah 1995; Ghazali 2001; Hisham 1989; Mansoor 1983; Nasr 1978). These methods have been used by several Islamic scholars such as Al Biruni, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Abu Hasan al-Basri, and Wasil Ibn ‘Ata’ as teaching tools for their students (Abdullah 1994; Abdullah 1995; Ghazali 2001; Hisham 1989; Mansoor 1983; Nasr 1978).

Throughout the years, many Islamic scholars have made use of active teaching methods such as dialogue and discussion, and have further established these methods in their teaching. Al-Abrashi (cited in Abdullah 1995, 213) affirms:

No one could argue against this method [discussion] as it harnesses the mind, strengthens one’s identity, as well as provides good training for expressing one’s views and opinions, in instilling one’s self-confidence, and in enhancing one’s ability to speak and discuss without texts.

The active teaching methods assist teachers to enhance the quality of traditional teaching methods. Instead of merely deliver knowledge to students, teachers are also responsible for actively developing students as whole, in the; spiritual, emotional, and physical domains. For instance, students are encouraged to be independent and responsible
learner through active learning strategies such as problem-based learning and collaborative learning. Through active teaching methods, students are expected to gradually take more responsibility for their own learning (Fink 2003). These strategies use questions which require a high cognitive demand such as reasoning, and not only emphasizing the questions that require a low cognitive demand. The students will gain knowledge, and moral and spiritual learning, with the necessary experience and guided practice, with the teacher becoming more of a facilitator. This will support the purpose of Islamic education that emphasizes the proper development of the individual that must be harmony between the material and the spiritual elements.

In the following section, we will present our teaching experiences in integrating spiritual and moral values within our students’ learning. Although the faculty that we have been engaged in is recognizably religious in terms of its studies, we perceive that an interactive teaching method is needed for the values to be wisely explored, particularly by students who already have extensive knowledge about Islam.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES

First Teaching Experience: Tengku Sarina

As a lecturer in a teacher education program, I dealt with prospective secondary school teachers. Through my experience, I identified gaps between the teaching and learning approaches that were expected by government policy, and the responses to the approaches from students and teaching colleagues. I was expected to employ an active learning approach that was aligned to national philosophy. However, I observed that the traditional, rather than active approach was still the dominant model being implemented in the program. I found that most of the students perceived the role of an educator as being that of a teacher giving information to them. They seemed to believe that their own role was to receive the information and complete assignments.

Therefore, in order to encourage and motivate my students to actively engage in learning strategies, I related my teaching methods to the principles of the National Education Philosophy, that education should be integrated and holistic. I explained to my students that the philosophy captures the spirit of the Islamic philosophy on
education, which emphasizes the concepts of integration and holism when it refers to “developing the potentials of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious” (Ministry of Education 1990, 5). I stressed that the philosophy agrees implicitly with the fundamental goals of servanthood (‘abd) and vicegerency (khalifah) and that Muslims shoulder their fard ‘ain (individual) and fard kifayah (societal) obligations.

I made more attempts to provide an active learning environment to get students involved in class activities. I started my classes with direct instructions (in lecture form), followed by active strategies such as group discussions, class presentations and projects. I applied these active learning strategies in my classroom for the benefits it could offer, such as providing the opportunity for my students to freely express ideas, thoughts and opinions, and also to improve students’ learning skills (e.g., communication skills, problem-solving skills) and confidence. Through these active learning strategies, I encouraged my students to work with each other. I believe working with others often increases involvement in learning as sharing ideas and thoughts, and responding to the reactions of others sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

I motivated my students to actively construct and create their own understanding rather than simply receive knowledge obediently from me. I delineated my role (the role of a teacher) as one that not only imparts information but also guides students to be more responsible in knowledge construction. As in active learning, students are expected to take more responsibility for their own learning (Fink 2003; Glasgow 1997). The role of a teacher is to guide students to distinguish between right and wrong behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, the key aim of education is to guide, as people are not able to develop their abilities and potentials automatically (Halstead 2004).

As a Muslim lecturer, I believe that my role as a teacher is not only to be responsible for transmitting knowledge to students, but also to integrate spiritual and moral values, and build a student’s personality and character by facilitating, motivating, and guiding them in their learning. Thus, I convinced my students that through their participation in active learning strategies, they would build self-confidence and self-dependence, and also become physically and mentally strong. Furthermore, the Islamic philosophy of education emphasizes that learners should be active in their learning. Al-Ghazali (1997b) recognized that, according to Islam, knowledge has two expressions, namely
theory (knowing or ‘Ilm), and practice (doing or ‘amal). These two dimensions are inseparable. “Nobody can be learned unless he puts his learning into practice” (Al-Ghazali 1978, 71). According to Al-Ghazali, “doing or ‘amal” includes not only those manifestations of the five senses, but the practices of the heart as well. He emphasized that learning something without putting it into practice invalidates what had been learned.

Here are some responses from my students (who are prospective secondary school teachers) when they were asked about their participation in classroom active learning strategies:

- Learning is only effective when it is put into practice; rather than simply memorizing information, Islam expects us to be active . . . thus, as students we have to be active to practice our knowledge and skills (Student A).
- . . . through participating in various classroom activities, we feel that we have been appreciated and respected by teachers . . . (Student B).
- I believe education is not merely the process of acquisition of information, whereby the teacher imparts knowledge that the student may absorb. Rather, it is knowledge building through doing or practice, as required in Islam . . . (Student C).
- Islam teaches us to be active learners, not just passively waiting to absorb knowledge from teachers . . . (Student D).
- We should be active in our learning; yes, sometimes we are required to receive knowledge, but at other times we need to be active, we need to seek our own knowledge and build our own meaning . . . just reflect back to our Islamic education history, the Prophet and Muslim scholars really encouraged their students to be active in knowledge seeking . . . (Student E).
- We need to be active and understand the Islamic education perspective regarding students’ roles well. Even though we need to acquire knowledge from teachers, that doesn’t mean we need to be passive; instead we are asked to be active, creative and critical in our learning . . . therefore, we must grab all learning activities prepared by our lecturers . . . (Student F).

**Second Teaching Experience: Yusmini**

I have been teaching counseling courses in the Islamic Studies faculty for a number of years, where I sought to assist students to
broaden their understanding of spiritual and moral values, and to learn how to discuss religious and spiritual content with clients. During the teaching and learning process, I encountered students who were either strong or at times even rigid in their religious and spiritual beliefs. In this position, students may impose their values and beliefs on clients, instead of negotiating using the clients’ own beliefs and values during counseling sessions. The effects of this practice may violate clients’ rights in making their own decisions about how to incorporate these values in their lives. Such attempts can be unethical, particularly when there are clients who view these values as not liberating, or who in some way might be positioned under the scrutiny of a dominant religious or spiritual discourse (Zinnbauer and Barret 2009). Therefore, there is a need to bring up spiritual topics in a way in which students can discuss them with clients in an ethical manner. Through the counseling courses, I incorporated active teaching and learning approaches, where we (my students and I) specifically discussed, in depth, areas of religion and spirituality. One of the exercises included questions such as:

1. Who were the significant people and what were the most significant events in my religious/spiritual development?
2. How have my religious and spiritual beliefs affected my growth and development?
3. How have I been shaped by these values in the past ten years?
4. How have I been changed by these values?
5. How have these values influenced my counseling practice?

The purpose of these questions was to assess students’ own spirituality, including a reflection of past religious and spiritual experiences, family influences, and education background. According to Northcut (2000), “once we understand our own history and our current comfort level with spirituality and religion it is helpful to consider the possible countertransference and ethical issues with which we may be confronted” (159). Within this teaching/learning approach, I allowed students to actively engage in constructing new narratives or interpretations of religious and spiritual matters. On the basis of this practice, an avenue is opened for students to offer what they understand about religious practices and their meanings, and therefore they might construct the kind of religious language that resonates with their and their clients’ religious perspective (Thayne 1998). The two-way dialogic process
invited both me, as the teacher, and the students, to explore the position of religion and spirituality in our lives. The invitation helped us to examine the religious experiences that had and were still shaping our personal lives, and the way we viewed the world. In undertaking this exploration, I did not position myself as the expert. Instead, students were invited to make meaning in the light of their context and knowledge, and were encouraged to think critically about the subject matters they were presented with, or came across. This kind of inquiry helped to attend to what was implicit and taken-for-granted in students’ descriptions, explanations, and interpretations of their religious and spiritual experiences.

Alternately, for some of the topics, I divided students into small groups and had them discuss and draw out important issues to share with the class. For example, an article about power in religious matters was presented. I asked students to investigate the notion of power in religious discourse/knowledge production. My intention was for students to unpack the liberations and/or limitations of religious ideas and practices, and its power on their lives. I wanted to assist students to see the construction of this discourse/power which had positioned them and their clients into a particular lifestyle and way of thinking. Therefore, students might rethink their positioning/view on these religious ideas and practices, and they might decide whether or not to unpack or deconstruct the religious assumptions that might have influenced their lives. However, the deconstructing approach is not to challenge the presented religious or spiritual values/power, but to open up possibilities for students to consider how they are positioned and whether they want to accept or change these positions (Freedman and Combs 1996).

Within the learning process, I committed to foreground in my teaching practice a caring solidarity, and a dialogic, and relational ethos. I was hoping that students, too, will carry these ethics in their professional work, and personal lives. From our discussions together, I expected students to use all opportunities for self-reflection and learning. The idea was to put the students’ personal and professional selves into question so that change and professional growth might become possible. On this basis, Britzman’s 1992 ideas about teacher identity development can also be applied to student/counselor identity development.

Research methodology has evolved to enable students to study their biographies and practices. If we can extend this idea to the murky world of
identity, and provide spaces for students to rethink how their constructions of the self, make for lived experiences, then I think students . . . will be able to politically theorize about the terrible problem of knowing thyself. . . . Students may come to understand knowing thyself as a construction and eventually, as social empowering. (43)

The process of studying the construction of personal and professional selves requires students and teachers to investigate the self, the motives and intentions, and the thoughts and actions that speak to who we are (Weingarten 2000). It is the notion that reflection taps into a more articulated and intuitive awareness (Loughran 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

The most remarkable aspect of the Islamic system of education is its aim to instill spiritual and good moral values in the minds and hearts of the learner. The concepts of education in Islam which are defined from three interrelated words namely *tarbiyah* (to grow, increase), *ta’lim* (to know, be informed, perceive), and *ta’dib* (to discipline and train), indicate the importance of the teacher in integrating spiritual and moral values through facilitating and guiding individual learners by providing them with more experiences, responsibility, and autonomy in knowledge construction. This is in accordance with Islamic education philosophy, which aims to harmonize physical, mental, emotional, and moral aspects of the life of the learner, in order to enable him or her to shoulder the responsibility of *khilafat* (Allah’s viceroyalty). Therefore, this method of teaching is rightly emphasized and given a significant place in the Islamic education system. The Islamic philosophy presents the importance of active learning, of critical thinking, and of integrating various sources/methods in information making. This is because Islamic education is concerned not only with the instruction and training of the mind by the transmitting of knowledge, but also with the education and refinement of the whole being of the student.

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