

Islamic Theology: Understanding Each Other in a Plural Context- Towards a Conceptual Clarity

Author

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Abstract

This lecture explores the topic of “understanding each other in a plural context” from anthropological point of view. The lecture draws on the anthropological perspective that human beings cannot be understood simply as biological objects. We are persons in essential relation with other persons and bound them by obligations and rights.

Through the Conceptual Clarity Model(CCM), the lecture presents the Qur’anic concept of ta’aruf (getting to know each other) from the perspective of Islam to engage students with relevant information and questions that are to elicit their fears of encountering the other and help them develop personal reflection. To assist students become more confident in questioning their beliefs and assumptions as of the basis for a larger and more adequate view of their relations and responsibilities is the basic aim of the lecture.

Timescale

One lecture (approximately 90 minutes)

Key Terms

Human being as relational being, Taaruf, Mutual understanding.

Key competences / Learning outcomes

- Self-awareness and awareness of others,
- Respectful engagement,
- Questioning competence,
- Competence to think in a complementary way.

References

- Shatibi, I. (1975). *El-muvafakat fi usuli el şerie*. (Şeyh Abdullah Dıraz, Şerh ve Tahkik).
- The Qur’an Translation.



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Teaching Steps

| Teaching Steps | | | |
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| Phase/Time | Approach | Method | Social Form/ Tasks for students |
| Preparation | 10 minutes can be given to each phase of the CCM. However, depending on the teacher's planning time can be divided differently. | Conceptual Clarity model (CCM) (Learning materials based on Conceptual Clarity model explained below) | Create a brave and safe space for discussion and reflections |
| Warm-up (15 min) | Teacher reads the following passage from the Qur'an: <i>O humankind! We created you all from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God are the ones most mindful of Him: God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things. (Q: al-Hujurāt 49:13)</i> | Listening and reflecting on the passage from the Qur'an | Plenary |



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| Reading (20 min) | <p>Students are only supposed to focus on one presented learning principle. Therefore the teacher must divide the group into 5 groups. Each group is responsible for one learning principle and must focus on that in order to move on to the following tasks.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focusing on one learning principle | Individual work |
| Production I (15 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The students come together with students who have focused on the same principle. Collectively they first explore their answers on the questions and then prepare a group presentation on their principle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussing their answers ▪ Explore the notes on the respective principle ▪ Preparing a short presentation of the principle | Group work |
| Production II (25 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The students present their principle and also a handout that can later be sent to the class. The teacher can also merge all 5 handouts into one document and provide the class with their findings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each group presents their respective principle and provides the rest of the class with the most crucial information. | Group presentations |
| Consolidation (15 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The teacher guides an open discussion on open questions and the importance of understanding self and others. The students reflect on the learning principles and find out possible ways they can be used or adapted in real-world situations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion on the importance of understanding self and others in a diverse society. | Plenary |

Material and Texts

Learning Principles of Conceptual Clarity Model

1. What is Conceptual Clarity Model ?

The “how of” the teaching and learning of Islamic conception of “understanding each other” will emphasize five principles to a more systematic way of learning which developed by the author under the name of Conceptual Clarity Model. Principles of Conceptual Clarity Model (CCM) are: *Reflections on the current situation; Exploring of text and context relationship; Reflections on personal development; Reflections for common good and Integration of content with effective pedagogy.*



Learning Principles 1: Reflections on the current situation.

The first principle invites the learners to express or collect examples from their own education, society or culture on the issue to be studied. They uncover much of the pre knowledge they have in stock from Islamic sources, bring their living experiences, their common codes of conduct, and reflect on their feelings and actions. They explain common understanding and practices around the issue. To lead a discussion of ongoing argumentations around the issue, teachers could ask such questions: *What is happening? What do people think and say? How do they behave? What do they believe and what do they value? What are the sources of their belief?*

Learning Principle 2: Exploring of text and context relationship.

Second principle encourages a historical- critical analysis where the spirit of the holy text is uncovered. Thus, teachers develop the ability of discerning messages that are directed to the original hearers of a specific time and place and those that are intended for general audiences of every time and place. It is crucial for teachers to develop contextual thinking in a discursive tradition, which has produced historically contingent categorizations of doctrines and practices such as Islam. The historical-critical study takes place around the questions of *what happened before and during the time of the Prophet? What did the sacred bring to the fore? What developed in history? What are the essentials for today? To name a few.*

Learning Principle 3: Reflections on personal development.

This is where a significant question is being raised: What does all mean to me in my own worldview? You have the chance to develop teaching and learning skills to broaden your students' knowledge and understanding about: *Ways to enhance the role of belief and faith in personal development; the meaning of being steward on earth; the meaning of knowing self and other; the relation between socially or culturally behaviors and personal choices. In your guidance, the students will be concerned about the human tendency that resides in mind and heart to reveal the role of feelings, deliberations, values, and commitments.*

Learning Principle 4: Reflections for common good.

A search for a theology which has a public language and develop students' appreciation of and commitment to socially just ways of living will provide a fresh lens on social issues. Skills in forming and maintaining positive relationship towards other need to be improved.

Without delivering static "truths" or determined attitudes I invite you to encourage your students through raising concern for the welfare, rights and dignity of all people and how equity is affected by cultural norms and social practices. Please deepen meaning of the verse: "Among God's signs is the creation of earth and heavens, and the diversity of your languages and colors. There truly are messages in these for those who know." (Rum 30:22)

Some leading reflective questions and themes could be: *As people of faith how can we contribute to the common good and become caring members of the society? What are the means? What are the characteristics of a relation involving intimacy, commitment and permanency? Does social distance affect our acceptance of the different?*



Learning Principle 5: Integration of content with effective pedagogy.

Transformative and productive pedagogies will be linked to the content for the purpose of to maintaining integrity between faith and life. You make sure that accurate picture is being gained for understanding the uniqueness of each person and show that people are more than a single story. Furthermore, you may enrich the experiences of *what it means to be fully human*.

You may wish to take these relatively five modest stages as a kind of exercises to enhance your educational practices.

Each of five principles of the model is important in its own right. They may not be used in proper order. You may use one principle or a combination of several or use the model as a whole depending on your aim and objectives.

The learning targets of understanding each other (Ta'aruf) as an ethics of encounter can be expressed in the following statements:

1. Human beings have been created from a common essence. This common essence is the root of our link with other human beings.
2. The fact that human beings were created different is God's divine gift for them. But this difference is not our most important designation. Difference is, rather, an opportunity to come to know each other and to work for common values.

