

## **ANALYZING ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IRAQ ACCORDING TO TEACHERS' OPINIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This study aimed to analyze textbook questions in Islamic education textbooks in the three levels of secondary schools in Iraq according to teachers' opinions depending on Bloom's taxonomy cognitive domain. The analysis of textbook questions is highly important in achieving its educational objectives, and thus numerous analytical models are available for the cognitive domain. Results show that questions in lower levels (Knowledge and Comprehension) are (High percentage) and questions in higher levels (application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) are very (Low percentage) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq.

**KEYWORDS:** textbook, questions, Bloom's taxonomy.

### **1. Introduction**

Any textbook should have a characteristic of cognitive development and creative thinking. This characteristic refers to the nature, relevance and level of learning activities included in the textbook. Activities given in the textbook are according to students' developmental level and the content is helpful in developing thinking skills in the students (Mahmood, 2011).

The Ministry of Education in Iraq pays due attention to the quality of education, in that, it is keen to improve and amend its content and approaches to cope with the requirements of the era. The interest of the Ministry is providing curricula, and textbooks in matter which approaching the international standards in terms of quality (Educational-Research-Centre, 2004).

A textbook includes philosophies, values, and principles that characterize the society teaching the curriculum in its contents (Alnajjar, 2002). Choosing the appropriate textbook for use in a science classroom is not an easy task. A textbook is an interpretation of the curriculum, guided by the world-views, values, and presuppositions of the authors (Leite, 1999). Therefore, the message of a textbook is neither neutral nor a faithful specification of any curriculum. Textbooks are also under the influence of constraints, such as economics and precedents set by states (Hubisz, 2003).

Textbook questions are one of the basic components contained in the textbooks that have significant importance for both students and teachers. According to Jo and Bednarz (2011), on one hand, the questions that address low-order level cognitive processes require teachers to “ask a learner to repeat or recognize some information exactly as it was presented in lesson.” On the other hand, the questions that address higher-order level cognitive processes require teachers to “ask the student to mentally manipulate bits of information previously learned to create an answer, or to support an answer with logically reasoned.”

Typically, the achievement in the school and higher order thinking skills among students are assessed using different forms of questions or tests. However, most of the items used in these assessments only focus on the level of knowing and thinking without any connection with higher order thinking skills. Hoepfel (1980) and Humblen (1984) found the objective of the question used in most educational levels overwhelmingly tap the lower understanding levels. Thus, if the test items used only lower level of thinking skills, students would not be able to develop and use their higher-order skills.

Questions, according to Aslan (2011), are parts of a textbook that openly interact with the student, and are directly posed to students. The thinking activity begins with the questions. However, only qualified and effective questions motivate students to exert intellectual effort. The importance of using higher-order qualified questions are as follows:

1. Improve students’ reasoning skills and cognitive processes,
2. Encourage students to synthesize their own knowledge and experiences with what they learn at school,
3. Encourage students to improve their personal viewpoints and interpretation of a topic,
4. Create new fields of questioning in the minds of students, and
5. Ensure that the students can use other viewpoints.

(Aslan, 2011)

One of the important educational purpose of textbook questions is to stimulate the thinking skills and problem solving skills of students, whether these questions are verbally asked by teachers in the classroom or presented in textbooks (Jo & Bednarz, 2011).

Many educational effects are obtained from textbook questions, and these effects depend on how often these questions are used by individual teachers and in what way they are used. The importance of textbook questions according to Jo & Bednarz (2009) can be summarized as follows:

1. Improve students’ understanding of content,
2. Assist students in identifying critical information in the textbook,
3. Help students to build strategies in processing given information, and
4. Stimulate students’ problem solving skills.

One way to improve students’ higher-order thinking skills is by using the questions in the textbook (Alul, 2000). The importance of the questions in each topic would be based on the importance of the evaluation process in teaching and learning. As the questions is to measure the achievements of the objectives topic, the questions should cover all these objectives. The questions are the teacher’s

instrument to achieve the educational goals, make students attain learning skills, and to make teachers recognize any difficulties faced by the students (Algobory & Alajrash, 2008).

All questions in textbooks can be classified into six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, this six levels are: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (Jo & Bednarz, 2011). This six levels also can be classified into two major categories: the lower levels (Knowledge and Comprehension) and the higher levels (Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation). Depending on the relationship between the level of student thinking (Low-order and Higher-order thinking skills) and the cognitive level of questions according to Bloom's taxonomy, students should be asked higher-order thinking skills questions to develop their student thinking skills (Jo & Bednarz, 2011).

The authors can refer to Bloom's Taxonomy in preparing questions in the textbook because this taxonomy is the most common classifications used in educational literature and previous studies. In addition, Bloom taxonomy is easily characterized which makes the educational process measurable and can improve content in the textbook. In this way, students can be tested with different types of questions according to Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive levels (Junoh, Muhamad, Abu, Jusoh, & Desae, 2012).

## **2. Problem statement**

Considering the importance of questions, many studies have analyzed textbook questions in different subjects. However questions in Islamic education textbooks in Iraqi secondary schools are not as adequately analyzed as the other subjects (Algobory & Alajrash, 2008; Alshahri, 2008; Alul, 2000). There are studies that have been analyzed Islamic education textbook questions in different countries (Al-Ayasirah, 2004; Al-Sewidi, 2000).

Corresponding to the above discussion on the textbook question, this study is concerned with the analysis questions of Islamic education textbooks of secondary schools in Iraq according to the Bloom's taxonomy cognitive domain. Considering that the Islamic textbook questions are supposed to cover all levels of cognitive domain (Al-Sewidi, 2000) and Iraqi Islamic education textbooks questions are not exempted from this rule, an analysis of Islamic textbook questions is necessary to determine the extent that these questions measure cognitive domain. Based on this need, the researcher expresses the need to analyze the Islamic educational textbook questions of secondary schools in Iraq based on Bloom's taxonomy.

## **3. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are the following:

- 1- To examine the perspective of teachers on the cognitive levels of the Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq.

## **4. Research questions**

- 1- What is the (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) level (High or Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq according to the perspective of teachers?

## 5. Results

The research questions would be answered based on the research results. The first , second and third research questions would be answered based on analysis checklists, the fourth research question would be answered based on interviewers form data.

### Sample

A total of 226 questions were obtained from the three textbooks (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Islamic education textbooks in secondary schools in Iraq) after analyzing and classifying the frequencies. The questions were distributed among the three textbooks as shown in Table 1. In the 1<sup>st</sup> secondary Islamic education textbook, Chapter 1 Lesson 8 only had 3 questions, whereas Chapter 1 lesson 4 had a higher number of questions (11). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> secondary Islamic education textbook, Chapter 2 Lesson 3 only had 2 questions, whereas Chapter 2 Lesson 2 had 9 questions. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> secondary Islamic education textbook, Chapter 2 Lesson 3 had no questions (0), whereas Chapter 1 Lesson 5 had 7 questions.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentage of questions for each textbook.

Islamic Education Textbook	Chapter	Number of Questions per chapter	Number of Questions per textbook	Percentage (%)
1 <sup>st</sup> secondary grade	Hadith	39	82	36.28%
	Serah	43		
2 <sup>nd</sup> secondary grade	Hadith	43	71	31.42%
	Serah	28		
3 <sup>rd</sup> secondary grade	Hadith	40	73	32.30%
	Serah	33		
Total		226	226	100%

However, a difference in the distribution of the questions in the three textbooks was noted. The 1<sup>st</sup> secondary Islamic education textbook had a higher number of questions than the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> secondary Islamic education textbooks (as shown in Fig. 2).

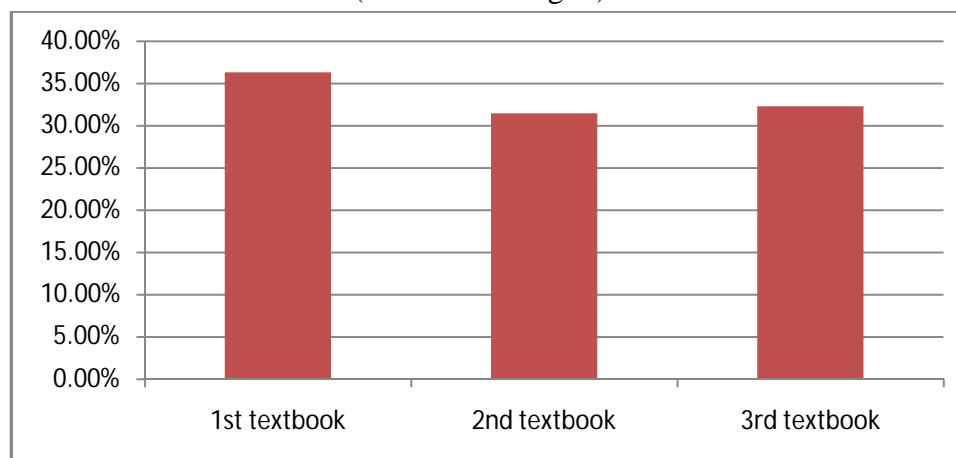


Fig. 2: Total percentage for each taxonomical level for the total questions in the three textbooks.

Question 1: What is the (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) level (High or Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq according to the perspective of teachers?

The results of interviewers form for three textbooks are shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8, these tables clearly show a difference in question distribution among the levels in each textbook.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> textbook, the perspective of teachers about the (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) level (High or Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq illustrated in Table 6. 100% of reviewers define Knowledge question level is (High) in this textbook, 92% of reviewers was found that Comprehension questions level is (High), 83% of reviewers was found that Application questions level is (Low), 75% of reviewers was found that Analysis questions level is (Low), 83% of reviewers was found that Synthesis questions level is (Low), 92% of reviewers was found Evaluation questions level is (Low).

Table 6: The perspective of teachers (1<sup>st</sup> textbook questions)

Textbook	Question	Chapter	Answer		Answer %		Average %		Reviewers form results
			High	Low	High %	Low%	High %	Low%	
1 <sup>st</sup> secondary Islamic education Textbook	Q1 (Knowledge)	Hadith	6	0	100%	0%	100%	0%	High
		Serah	6	0	100%	0%			
	Q2 (Comprehension)	Hadith	6	0	100%	0%	92%	8%	High
		Serah	5	1	83%	17%			
	Q3 (Application)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q4 (Analysis)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	25%	75%	Low
		Serah	2	4	33%	67%			
	Q5 (Synthesis)	Hadith	2	4	33%	67%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	0	6	0%	100%			
	Q6 (Evaluation)	Hadith	0	6	0%	100%	8%	92%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			

For the second textbook, the perspective of teachers about the (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) level (High or Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq illustrated in Table 7. 92% of reviewers define Knowledge question level is (High) in this textbook, 83% of reviewers was found that Comprehension questions level is (High), 83% of reviewers was found that Application questions level is (Low), 83% of reviewers was found that Analysis questions level is (Low), 75% of reviewers was found that Synthesis questions level is (Low), 92% of reviewers was found Evaluation questions level is (Low).

Table 7: The perspective of teachers (2<sup>nd</sup> textbook questions).

Textbook	Question	Chapter	Answer		Answer %		Average %		Reviewers form results
			High	Low	High %	Low%	High %	Low%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> secondary Islamic education Textbook	Q1 (Knowledge)	Hadith	5	1	83%	17%	92%	8%	High
		Serah	6	0	100%	0%			
	Q2 (Comprehension)	Hadith	5	1	83%	17%	83%	17%	High
		Serah	5	1	83%	17%			
	Q3 (Application)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q4 (Analysis)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q5 (Synthesis)	Hadith	2	4	33%	67%	25%	75%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q6 (Evaluation)	Hadith	0	6	0%	100%	8%	92%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			

For the third textbook, the perspective of teachers about the (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) level (High or Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq illustrated in Table 8. 92% of reviewers define Knowledge question level is (High) in this textbook, 100% of reviewers was found that Comprehension questions level is (High), 83% of reviewers was found that Application questions level is (Low), 83% of reviewers was found that Analysis questions level is (Low), 67% of

reviewers was found that Synthesis questions level is (Low), 83% of reviewers was found Evaluation questions level is (Low).

Table 8: The perspective of teachers (3<sup>rd</sup> Textbook questions).

Textbook	Question	Chapter	Answer		Answer %		Average %		Reviewers form results
			High	Low	High %	Low%	High %	Low%	
3rd secondary Islamic education Textbook	Q1 (Knowledge)	Hadith	6	0	100%	0%	92%	8%	High
		Serah	5	1	83%	17%			
	Q2 (Comprehension)	Hadith	6	0	100%	0%	100%	0%	High
		Serah	6	0	100%	0%			
	Q3 (Application)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q4 (Analysis)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			
	Q5 (Synthesis)	Hadith	2	4	33%	67%	33%	67%	Low
		Serah	2	4	33%	67%			
	Q6 (Evaluation)	Hadith	1	5	17%	83%	17%	83%	Low
		Serah	1	5	17%	83%			

## 6. Recommendations

In the light of the study results in checklist and reviewers form, the researcher recommends the questions employed in the Islamic educational textbooks for secondary schools in Iraq should be improved to cover the six cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

## 7. Summary

The present study is the first attempt in Iraq to analyze Islamic educational textbook questions in secondary schools as a researcher's information. The results of this study is hoped to be a helpful aid to researchers and curriculum designers at the Ministry of Education in Iraq. Iraqi curriculum planners and developers may also find effective educational ideas in the results of this study by introducing different levels of questions and activities in their planning of the new Iraqi curriculum and textbooks. Improving the questions of textbooks tends to develop the educational process for



students and teachers. The analysis in this study depends on the opinions of Islamic education teachers, results show that the questions in (Knowledge and Comprehension) levels are (High) and questions in (application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) levels are (very Low) in Islamic educational textbooks' questions in secondary schools in Iraq.

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