



Islamic Religious Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina Maktabs through the Prism of Mu'allims

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Abstract

This article aims to highlight the core educational/ upbringing processes of Islamic Religious Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina maktabs, based on the theoretical framework and qualitative research using interview methods. A short framework of the development and status of maktabs in Bosnia and Herzegovina as basic nonformal institutions of Islamic education among Muslims is provided in the introduction. The aim of the research is to examine the attitudes and experiences of muallims regarding the possibilities of realizing the fundamental areas of religious education/upbringing, and the use of approaches, methods, and forms of religious education of children in maktabs. This part of the research also aims to examine the perceptions of muallims about the importance of the principles of religious upbringing of children. The findings show that through methodical/didactical religious education work with children, it is possible to develop all areas of education and that this process runs simultaneously, building a complete personality of the child. It is also apparent that Muallims respect the basic educational principles, with a note that certain educational principles are difficult to fully implement due to numerous limitations. When it comes to educational approaches and methods, it is evident that the prevalent approach is directed towards positive transformation and the encouragement of pupils, which stimulates the internalization of universal and Islamic values.

Keywords: Maktabs, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muallims, Upbringing Areas, Principles.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina Maktabs – Background

Islam is the predominant faith in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), making up 51% of the population, of whom mostly identify as Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). The origin of Islamic education in Bosnia and Herzegovina dates back as early as the 15th century, when the Ottoman Empire conquered the region of Bosnia and imposed its traditional *maktab*¹ and *madrassa* education system. With the arrival of the Ottomans in Bosnia, all educational institutions were formed and developed under the influence of previously established schools in Turkey. The Ottoman education system was unique within its region of the Empire. Muslim schools in Bosnia from the 15th to the second half of the 19th centuries had a predominantly religious character based on this model. Among all schools that existed during the Ottoman reign in

¹ Maktabs are religious nonformal schools attached to the mosques or as a part of educational/maktab centers of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia, *maktabs* were the most numerous, and their exact number is difficult to determine. However, the vast number of mosques indicate that the number of *maktabs* was likely high. During Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were over a thousand *maktabs*.²

As primary religious schools, *sibjan maktabs* were usually built by mosques. The subjects taught in these *maktabs* and the textbooks used depended on the qualifications and abilities of the students and their teacher (*mu'allim*). In highly ranked *maktabs*, the education was generally better and students used more textbooks. In Sarajevo *maktabs*, for example, "Sufara" (textbooks for proper reading of the Qur'an), "Tajvid", "Ilmihal", "Ilmi Ahlaq", "Fiqh", "Hadith", "Muni", "Halebija", "Ta'limul muta'allim", and other textbooks were used. The aim of *maktab* teaching was to instruct students in reading the Qur'an properly and to teach them the foundations of religion, religious rituals, and morality. Teaching methods in *maktabs* were mostly traditional. The *maktab* teaching was performed by a *mu'allim* who was generally the imam of the neighboring mosque, in addition to his "halifa" (*mu'allim*'s assistant), who helped the *mu'allim* in the instruction process. Children memorized subjects that they could not understand because the instruction was in Turkish and Arabic. It is not certain how long the school year lasted; a school age for admission of children was not prescribed, nor was there any division into classes.³

The occupation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not interrupt the work of *sibjan maktabs*, and they remained unchanged until the end of the Austro-Hungarian reign. In the 1890's, the Austro-Hungarian government sought to regulate the teaching instruction in *maktabs*, since they were less accommodated to modern requirements. Reformed *maktabs* called "Maktabi ibtidaije" were opened after 1893. It was envisaged that both religious and secular subjects would be taught in reformed *maktabs*. When Bosnian intellectual Safvet-beg Bašagić was asked about the reason for Bosnian cultural and educational backwardness, he answered that it was in *maktabs ibtidaije* (the reformed *maktabs*). He answered this way because the *maktab* classes were obligatory for the children who were 7 years of age and had to attend classes in *maktabs* for three school years. Students could enter the elementary school only after graduating from *maktab*. This provision resulted in children graduating from *maktabs* at the age of 10, and from elementary school at the age of 14 or 15. For most of them, that meant that it was too late to enroll in high school. Only a few numbers of *maktab* graduates enrolled in high school, so Muslim students could not occupy important positions in society because they did not have the proper qualifications.⁴

Between the two world wars, Raisu-l Ulema Džemaludin ef. Čaušević advocated for the reform of *maktabs*. His special merit was reflected in the introduction of the native language in *maktab* instruction and the printing of religious textbooks in the native language which was however, written in Arabic letters (the script called Arabica). During the Communist regime (after 1945), children's religious education in *maktabs* was stifled and closely controlled.

Today, however, *maktabs* are basic nonformal institutions of Islamic education among Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The basic goal of the *maktab* education is to introduce the

² Ismet Kasumović, *Školstvo i obrazovanje u Bosanskom ejaletu za vrijeme osmanske uprave (Schooling and Education in the Bosnian Eyalet during the Ottoman Administration)* (Mostar: Islamski Kulturni Centar, 1999), 95.

³ Hajrudin Čurić, *Muslimansko školstvo u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1918. (Muslim Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina until 1918.)* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1983), 201.

⁴ Ibid., 200–212.

basic Islamic teachings to children, and prepare them for the practical living of Islam.⁵ Students aged 6 to 15 (primary school age) are formally enrolled in the appropriate class based on their age or level of knowledge. The curriculum consists of nine years of teaching, with nine corresponding grades organized in three levels. Based on the extensive reform of *maktab* religious education conducted by the Department for Religion and Education at the Riyasat of the Islamic Community in 2003, the textbooks (Ilmihal) for all levels of maktab religious education were published. Additional reform was done in 2020 including newly published textbooks. School groups are formed according to levels (basic, middle, and upper level), and classes are held two, three, or four times a week, depending on the jamaat, from four to six hours specifically for each level. Teachers who have graduated from one of the Islamic faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad carry out teaching.⁶ According to statistical data of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 2021/2022 academic year, over 100,000 children were enrolled in *maktabs*. The total number of *maktabs* in the country is 2,000, including *maktabs* of Bosniak communities in the diaspora.⁷

Theoretical Framework of the Research

The fundamental intention of religious education is the positive and complete development of man, and the realization of his maximum potential. Therefore, the process of religious education should start from early childhood. One of the key issues of religious pedagogy is how and in what directions to educate. On the trail of the mentioned question, this research deals with the educational/upbringing areas, principles, and methods of religious education of children within the framework of maktab teaching in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Qur'anic perspective deeply establishes a comprehensive approach to upbringing and education, urging the development of moral education, spiritual (state of the soul), intellectual (levels and styles of thinking), aesthetic, social and other areas. The Islamic pedagogical approach recognizes the combination of cognitive (al-'aql), affective – heart (qalb) and spiritual (ruh) aspects of a person's physical and moral being, as well as other abilities in order to create deeply-minded, creative, and well-educated individuals. Education is not only aimed at filling minds with knowledge, but also at fostering good characters and understanding social obligations. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, motivational learning emphasizes the incorporation of Islamic values to create holistic individuals (insan al-kamil).⁸

⁵ “Nastavni plan i program mektepske pouke” (“The Curriculum of Maktab Education”), *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini (Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina)*, Taken from: http://mekteb.islamskazjednica.ba/images/stories/dokumenti/npp_mektepske_pouke_2018-1.pdf (2019). (accessed 22 July, 2019)

⁶ Dina Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, “The Structure of Islamic Educational Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Curriculum Development”, *Islamic Textbooks and Curricula in Europe* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang – Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2011).

⁷ “Pravilnik o mektebima i mektebskoj nastavi” („Rulebook on Maktabs and Maktab Education“), *Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini (Riyasat of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina)*, Taken from: <http://rijaset.ba/mekteb/normativ/pravilnik>. (accessed 20 December, 2010)

⁸ Dina Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, “Die Islamische Religionspädagogik in Tradition und Theologie – eine Spurensuche nach Merkmalen” („Islamic Religious Pedagogy in Tradition and Theology: A Search of Characteristics“), *Islamunterricht im Diskurs: Religionspädagogische und fachdidaktische Ansätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023): 55–72.

Based on this idea, the classifications of special educational/upbringing areas are developed in the Islamic pedagogical literature, which facilitates a more specific study of the overall educational theory and practice. For instance, Ali Abd Al-Halim Mahmud (2008) in his book *Usul At-Tarbiyah Islamiyyah / Fundamentals of Islamic Pedagogy*⁹, elaborates in detail the areas of human education such as moral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, social, and political.

In Western pedagogical literature, there are also diverse classifications of basic educational/upbringing areas. Among them, the following stand out: physical, intellectual, moral, social, aesthetic, and work education.¹⁰ In addition to the basic ones, within the framework of different classifications, the following areas of education could be found: biological, humanistic, health, self-protection, technical, traffic, safety, ecological, political, civil, democratic, economic, artistic, sexual, intercultural, education for peace and non-violence, education for human rights, education for tolerance, education for free time, education for sustainable development, etc. The aforementioned areas are often studied as an integral part of one or more basic educational areas. The educational process should satisfy the needs of all these dimensions of the human being, including the body, sense of art, beauty, emotions, moral sense, mental abilities, among other aspects; above all, of course, faith and the religious needs should permeate the entire education.

Presentations on the principles of religious upbringing and education of children can also be found at the classical Muslim scholars, such as: Ibn Sahnun, Al-Jahiz, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Az-Zarnuji, Al-Ghazali and others. Ibn Sahnun, in his book from the ninth century, "Adab Al-Muallimin / Rules of Conduct for Teachers", pointed out that education should be based on fairness, responsibility, modesty, and patience of educators, which are important principles of religious education of children. Also in the ninth century, Al-Jahiz wrote the book "Kitab Al-Muallimin / The Book for Teachers", in which he emphasized the need for educators to take into account the mental abilities of students, and to use understandable language. This recommendation indicates the important principles of adequacy and individualization. Further, Al-Farabi emphasized that learning is "a purposeful activity that aims to achieve a certain goal, which is the understanding of things that were not previously known", which is the basic principle of upbringing and education, often called the principle of activity. Ibn Sina explained how important it is for children to develop emotional control. He emphasized that the educational process must be interesting, enriched by the enjoyable and exciting experience of educators. In his works, Ibn Sina especially emphasized the principle of socialization, which helps children and young people to become integrated members of their community, and to find their place in society.¹¹

A special contribution to the methodology of religious education was done by Al-Ghazali, whose works are a rich source of rules and legalities for the religious education of children. In his work "Ihya Ulum Ad-Din/The Revival of Islamic Sciences", El-Ghazali explains numerous principles and rules within the educational process: compassion in approach,

⁹ Ali Abd Al-Halim Mahmud, *Osnovi islamske pedagogije (Fundamentals of Islamic Pedagogy)* (Novi Pazar: El-Kelimeh, 2008).

¹⁰ Ante Vukasović, *Pedagogija (Pedagogy)* (Zagreb: Hrvatski katolički zbor MI, 2001).

¹¹ Sebastian Günther, „Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn: Medieval Muslim Thinkers on Educational Theory“, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2006): 367–388.

appropriateness of content, consistency, positive orientation, etc.¹² Apart from him, Az-Zarnuji in the book "Ta'lim Al Muta'llim / Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning", written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, also discussed those educational principles. This work was used centuries later as essential literature in the field of ethics and pedagogy. Didactic-methodical principles and rules are extensively elaborated on a classical way with practical examples, such as: gradualness, repetition, active learning, interest, connection with practice, moderation according to the nature of the student, learning from easier to harder, from closer to further, from simple to complex, etc.¹³

Different classifications of the principles of education exist within contemporary pedagogical literature. Authors Malić and Mužić in their book "Pedagogy"¹⁴ consider the following principles of educational work: activity, connection of theory and practice, individualization, socialization, appropriateness, systematicity, gradualism, clarity, rationality, durability of adopted contents, positive orientation, and unique orientation with pluralism of action and attitudes. Vukasović deals more thoroughly with the following nine educational principles: purposefulness, activity, positive orientation, versatility, appropriateness, individualization, socialization, uniqueness, and consistency.

Considering the existence of a large number of principles and different classifications, it is up to religious educators to guide the educational process in a planned and organized manner using the principles of education, and to take into account the specific dynamics of their representation while striving to achieve the set goals.

Educational principles that are fundamental and indispensable for religious educational work with children have been singled out from the above classifications. In the analyses of principles of religious upbringing of children, Vukasović's classification is used in the research.

When it comes to educational strategies that combine educational methods within themselves, the following classifications exist within the pedagogical literature: 1) according to the method of acquiring knowledge and developing skills (lecture, participative and interactive, research, active-experiential, action and complex, and strategy warm-up, and relaxation), 2) according to the size of the educational group (strategies suitable for large groups, smaller groups, or teams and strategies suitable for working with one student), 3) according to areas of education (strategies of physical, moral, intellectual, work, social, and aesthetic education), 4) according to constructivist theory (classical, traditional, and strategy-oriented activities of students), 5) according to social needs (strategy of existence, socialization, and individuation).¹⁵ Each of the mentioned educational strategies, which are also presented by some authors as broader educational methods, includes several educational methods.

One of the classifications of educational strategies presented in the pedagogical literature is a classification based on three methodological approaches in the process of education, and on the pedagogical acts that characterize them: 1) improving guidance and

¹² Ebu Hamid Muhammed El-Gazali, *Ihja Ulumid-din – Oživljavanje vjerskih nauka (The Revival of Islamic Sciences)* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2004).

¹³ Dina Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, „Didaktičko-metodičke ideje Burhanuddina ez-Zernudžija“ („Didactic-Methodical Ideas of Burhanuddin Az-Zarnuji“), *Novi Muallim*, Vol 8, No 32 (2022): 80–87.

¹⁴ Josip Malić, Vladimir Mužić, *Pedagogija (Pedagogy)* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1990).

¹⁵ Milan Matijević, Vesna Bilić, Siniša Opić, *Pedagogija za učitelje i nastavnike (Pedagogy for Teachers)* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2016), 153–165.

encouragement 2) prevention and 3) disciplining and sanctioning. This classification is elaborated by Bosnian pedagogue Slatina¹⁶ in his *theory of confluent education*. According to this theory, education is understood as a process in which the educator, by means of psychosocial and sociocultural actions, improves and encourages persons, striving to preserve, improve, and form their personality, and prevent or remove, depending on the person's current needs, with the aim of developing the person into a versatile, complete, spiritual, and active human being. The roots of this classification could be recognized in the Qur'anic and Sunnah concept of education, which aims at education/upbringing that predominantly use encouraging, stimulative, and transformative methods. When analyzing the methods of religious education of children in BH Maktabs, the above theory and classification is evident.

Research methodology

A qualitative method was used in the research: a guided interview, which implies that the topics and questions are specified in advance in a given framework, and that the interviewer decides on the sequence of topics and the way of asking questions.¹⁷ A survey questions included a set of open-ended questions, which enabled participants to express their attitudes, opinions, experiences and practices. Answers to open-ended questions were classified/coded according to the specific categories related to the research questions. The research sample consists of muallims/teachers who work as religious educators in Maktabs of the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also includes Maktabs in the Bosniak diaspora. Interviews were conducted in 2019 with sixteen mu'allims (male) and one female mu'allim from 'Bosnia and Herzegovina and four Maktabs in the Bosniak diaspora (Sweden, Croatia, Belgium and the United States). The interview was conducted in person or by phone or Skype, depending on the availability of the participants. The criteria for selecting participants were: 1) that they have a minimum of five years of work experience in maktab teaching, and 2) that they are recommended by three colleagues/muallims.

The aim of the research is to examine the attitudes and experiences of muallims regarding the possibilities of realizing the fundamental areas of religious education/upbringing, and the use of approaches, methods, and forms of religious education of children in the maktabs where they work. Also, this part of the research aims to examine the perceptions of muallims about the importance of the principles of religious upbringing of children.

The paper is based on the following research questions: 1) What areas of religious education/upbringing are developed in maktab pupils; 2) What are the most important principles of the methodology of religious upbringing of children according to the attitudes of the muallim; and 3) What approaches and methods of religious education muallims use in maktabs. In the research results, the findings and the most frequent examples obtained through interviews with muallims related to the research questions are presented.

¹⁶ Mujo Slatina, *Od individue do ličnosti – wodenje u teoriju konfluentnog obrazovanja (From Individuality to Personality: Introduction to the Theory of Confluent Education)* (Zenica: Dom štampe, 2005)

¹⁷ Vlado Andrić, *Metode i tehnike istraživanja u psihologiji odgoja i obrazovanja (Research Methods and Techniques in the Psychology of Upbringing and Education)* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1986, 38.

Research results

The interviews showed that muallims in maktab largely strive to develop the fundamental areas of education, mostly intellectual and moral, then social and physical, and at the very least, aesthetic and work education. They emphasized that they try their hardest to develop moral education, but there are certain limitations, which predominantly direct their work towards the development of intellectual education. One of the limitations they singled out refers to textbooks (*ilmihals*), which represent a rich source of information, but mostly offer data and statistics. Muallims believe that textbooks lack more didactically designed educational content and tasks, as well as practical advice and guidelines focused on educational work with children. Another limitation is the external evaluation in the form of final exams in maktab (*hatma*), in which participants are required to memorize and reproduce information, while the educational aspect of the children's personality development is neglected during the evaluation. In a similar format, competitions are organized for participants, where the acquired information (general knowledge test) and the skills of learning and memorizing the Qur'an (*Kiraet*) are evaluated. This approach and concept of curriculum, textbooks, competitions, and final exams limits teachers in their efforts to devote themselves to the development of moral, social, physical, aesthetic, and other basic educational areas to a certain extent, which can be seen from the following examples.

Development of educational/upbringing areas in *Maktab*

In terms of the development of the physical education area, *muallims* try to develop awareness among participants about the importance of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, and encourage them to be physically active through various recreational and sports activities, as well as physical exercises. They often organize educational trips with encouragement for physical activities such as sledding, skiing, hiking, running, football, volleyball, basketball and swimming. On these trips, through performing prayers together, they try to highlight the physical benefits of regular prayer. Tournaments and competitions are organized in maktab to promote sports such as athletics, gymnastics, football, futsal, volleyball, basketball and table tennis. Maktab playgrounds, as well as children's parks near the maktab, are used for the development of physical education. One more example from the maktab is the cooperation with the Interreligious Council of BH, in which a race is organized for young Orthodox and Muslim children, who are challenged to run from a church to a mosque, in order to encourage healthy lifestyles and promote interreligious cooperation. Muallims sometimes organize free dental and ophthalmological examinations for *Maktab* pupils. They organize the memorization of important concepts and terms through games, movements, and physical exercises. The end of the lesson is organized through games that engage the children physically (e.g. day-night game, repeat through movement, pantomime).

The intellectual field of education is given the most attention in the maktab curriculum, textbooks, competition plan, and external evaluation. Muallims develop the children's desire to acquire useful knowledge and, throughout teaching units, strengthen their motivation for reading, learning, and critical thinking. Activities aimed at learning and memorizing the Qur'an, as well as guided conversations about the messages of the learned verses, remain unavoidable. In many maktab, there are *hifz* sections, through which children memorize the Qur'an. Special

attention is paid to learning Arabic script, as well as the mother tongue and some foreign languages. In school lessons, muallims use various multimedia content to motivate children. Group analysis of instructive educational and cartoon films are also organized. Attendees who study and work hard are rewarded. It can be concluded that during the development of the children's intellectual education, muallims focus on reading, memorizing, understanding information and facts, and on the development of critical thinking.

Muallims consider the area of moral education to be the most important in working with the maktab population, stressing that building good behavior in children is the primary goal of education. Therefore, they are taught about Islamic rules of behavior towards parents, teachers, neighbors, elders, peers, and others. They try to develop children's identity and a sense of pride in their religion, nation, language, culture, and tradition. Children develop confidence, self-esteem, self-control, and responsibility. They encourage students to apply what they have learned practically in school and in life as well as motivate them to respect the rules of modest clothing. They also organize educational trips, which are used as an opportunity to monitor and influence the children's behavior. They continuously have open conversations with children about their individual needs and the challenges they face. They focus special attention on preventive work with children and discussions on topics such as smoking, alcohol, and immorality. The focus of the work is also on developing friendship, a culture of dialogue, and qualities such as reliability, honesty, patience, empathy, gentleness, resourcefulness, and problem-solving. *Muallims* develop the intrinsic motivation in children to be benefactors, waqifs, and generally useful to the community. The above examples show that the relationship between muallims is focused on the development of good behavior in children as well as on the application of what has been learned in various social contexts.

The development of moral education is largely connected with the development of social education. The interviewed muallims pay a lot of attention to this area and try to develop it through numerous activities. They work with children on the rules of behavior according to a number of social categories and accustom them to socializing and living with others. They are encouraged to apply the learned rules in relation to family members, teachers, neighbors, friends, peers, younger, and older people. Special attention is paid to the development of intercultural education based on the principle of integration. Through the organization of multi-day excursions, they develop socialization, which is the primary goal of this area of education. They organize visits to sick members of the jamaat, home visits to peers, as well as visits to hospitals and homes/institutions for neglected children. They promote socialization by helping each other in actions and humanitarian activities. An important segment of socialization is devoted to the development of critical attitudes towards various forms of antisocial behavior in the community, and to the development of non-violent communication skills. Muallims strengthen the children's sense of community through group performances and actions and work in pairs.

From the content and procedures with which they strive to develop the aesthetic area of education, muallims reported that they constantly emphasize the beauty and harmony of God's creation. Together with the children, they organize actions to clean the mosque and the backyard area, as well as starting a project to decorate and maintain the maktab classrooms. They continuously strive to develop the awareness of the participants about the importance of

protecting the environment, keeping their body and clothes clean and beautiful, and to find the balance between Islamic dress codes and fashion trends. In some schools, competitions in beautiful clothing are organized. Courses for muezzins and competitions of reciting the Qur'an, choir and drama sections are also found in numerous maktabs. Cultural programs are often organized in which pupils participate, through which the positive aspects of various types of art are highlighted. Through their work in the aesthetic field of education, muallims strives to develop a proper attitude towards beauty.

The working area of education is specific because all the previously mentioned areas of education are in the function of its development. Muallims tend to develop the children's belief that success comes from efforts, preparing them to take responsibility. They encourage children's freedom and creative practical expression, and to find an outlet for that expression by participating in various programs and activities in maktabs and community. The habit of organizing their day and orienting themselves towards prayers is being strongly recommended. In doing so, the children follow and record the prayers they performed, and receive prizes. Muallims organize courses through which children are prepared for practical work in the mosque, such as vacuuming the mosque, preparing snacks, wiping the blackboard and cleaning the classroom. Muallims talk to children about the schedule of daily activities, habits, boredom, laziness, use of mobile phones and social networks, games, long sleep and many other challenges. Parents sometimes participate in these activities. They try to talk with parents about children's behavior and work habits, working together on their development.

Presented examples indicate the dedication and creativity of muallims in the process of developing the basic areas of education for maktab students, which can serve as an inspiration to other teachers in the process of choosing and adapting existing activities, but also as motivation when creating their own activities. Muallims strive to develop fundamental, but also additional areas of education such as health, environmental, artistic and intercultural, peace and non-violence, human rights, fair and balanced relations between the sexes, tolerance, and time management. Although muallims try to develop all educational areas, it is noticeable that they pay the most attention to intellectual and moral education due to certain limitations explained above in the text.

The importance of the principles of religious upbringing of children

The results show that muallims believe that the stated principles and the way they are implemented are very important in the realization of maktab teaching. Many examples of principle implementation were given by muallims, but only few of them will be presented here.

Muallims have the most difficulty implementing the principles of individualization, versatility, and uniqueness. Satisfying the principle of individualization is difficult due to the large number of enrolled children, and large groups. Some muallims try to individualize teaching according to the principle of appropriateness for gender and age, but rarely respecting individual characteristics and specificities. They try to have more frequent contact with the children, get information through parents and friends, talk to them when the opportunity arises, and prepare individualized tasks when working with combined classes. The most common example of applying the principle of individualization is working with talented students, as well as with students who have problems and difficulty following lessons. Muallims try to respect the

principle of socialization through the intentional religious upbringing of children, which aims to prepare them to be active and useful members of society.

The principle of versatility is challenging to implement due to the lack of time for detailed planning and preparation of maktab lessons since in most cases, they work as imams. However, they strive to respect the principle of versatility, attempting to develop as many areas of religious education as possible, as well as sustaining positive behavior patterns of children. Muallims try to make correlations within the content of different school subjects and topics. Some of the teachers pointed out that with each teaching unit, they try to cover as many areas and dimensions of the child's personality as possible, jointly analyzing the topic from different perspectives.

Due to the lack of adequate communication and cooperation with the children's parents, it can be challenging for religious education teachers in schools to respect the principle of uniqueness. Given that all factors of education (parents, family, and teachers) are required to work harmoniously and uniquely on the child's development, muallims encounter practical and time limitations in its implementation. Nevertheless, most muallims try to cooperate with parents, to a greater or lesser extent, and some muallims cooperate with Islamic religious education teachers in state schools. Trying to respect this principle, they involve parents in maktab activities, invite them on trips and excursions, organize regular parental meetings, and establish contact through social networks. They try to inform them about the children's progress through messages and calls, student booklets, information sessions, and written reports.

The principle of activity was highlighted by the interviewed muallims as one of the most important principles. Pupils get the necessary space to participate in decision-making, and the opportunity for practical application of what they have learned. Muallims stated that they try to involve children in all situations by means of questions and answers, conversations, insisting on their opinions and suggestions, and encouraging practical application of what they have learned wherever possible. Individual teachers agree on topics with the students, according to their needs and interests, which they then work on together. Using the principle of activity, they tend to create a pleasant working atmosphere and prevent boredom and monotony.

Consistency is respected by muallims by insisting on mutually agreed upon rules and the Islamic message that the agreement is a trust that must be respected. They persistently advise pupils to develop positive habits. In addition to the above, they strive to establish a balance between principledness and justified flexibility, following the example of Muhammad, peace be upon him.

The principle of patience is, according to the opinion of the interviewed muallims, one of the most important educational principles. Its non-compliance leads to serious negative consequences, which are manifested in the loss of motivation for learning, and the appearance of fear and discomfort in children. Muallims strive to develop patience through awareness of its importance, as well as strengthen emotional control and qualities such as gentleness, empathy, flexibility and friendliness.

Muallims strive to respect the principle of gradualness through lesson planning, monitoring children's progress, and gradual acceleration. When they notice that the children have not adequately mastered certain contents, they return to them, respecting the pace and needs of the children. They face difficulties in implementing this principle due to some

children's irregular attendance of classes, but they try in various ways to motivate children to come regularly in order to gradually and continuously progress.

Approaches and methods of religious education in maktabs

Given that the educational practice of Muhammad, peace be upon him, was dominated by an encouraging and transformative approach, then an approach of prevention, and rarely a sanctioning method, this research examines which approaches and methods dominate in BH maktabs. Through analysis, it was found that the approach of improving guidance and encouragement dominates in the work of muallims. The methods most frequently used in the religious upbringing of children include the following: the method of storytelling, explaining, teaching, lecturing, talking, counseling, encouraging, education by example, and the method of persuasion.

The teaching method is mostly used in processing a new teaching unit, with the aim of learning, memorizing, understanding, and adopting new material. The method is most often applied at the beginning of class in combination with the lecturing method and other methods. The lecturing method is one of the basic methods of religious education of children in maktabs. The interviewed teachers stated that they often use multimedia content in addition to the application of the lecturing method, with which they try to make the lessons more interesting. In situations in which children are trying to present certain knowledge, skills, abilities, and habits, the explanation method is used very often by muallims. The storytelling method is often used at the beginning or end of the lesson to encourage children to think about the messages of the story. Muallims use instructive Qur'anic sayings, stories of the lives of the prophets, companions and later generations, picture books and collections of instructive stories, sayings from our culture and tradition, and other forms of appropriate stories. In the form of a group discussion, the conversation method is most often used. Muallims pointed out that they use the conversation to involve the participants, activate and engage their capacities, encourage them to ask questions, and gain insights into the level of their understanding and progress.

Muallims use the counseling method frequently in combination with other methods, especially in the approach of prevention, then through talking with children, as well as when dealing with sensitive topics. The most common form of counseling is group counseling, due to the limited time frame. If necessary, they try to organize individual counseling for the pupils. The method of persuasion was less often used in the work of the examined muallims. The process of developing beliefs, attitudes, principles, and views takes a lot of time, which is challenging for teachers who work with a large number of children and have little time at their disposal. However, despite the mentioned limitations, muallims try to apply this method because it is directly related to the internalization of knowledge and values. Muallims emphasized that they focus on this method when transferring the contents of the aqeedah, learning the meaning of surahs, understanding the purpose of regulations, and so on.

The method of education by example is the ideal for which muallims tend to strive. This method implies education by one's own examples, authority, actions, behavior, and lived experiences of the educator. Muallims stated that they try to be examples and role models for the children, and they try to confirm what they are taught and raised through their own actions.

The approach of prevention is the next approach that the interviewed muallims use in the religious upbringing of children. This approach is quite difficult due to the large number of participants in maktab classes, time constraints, and the difficulties of continuous interaction and communication with children, as well as the children's irregularity in terms of attendance. Among the methods of prevention are supervision, drawing attention and warning, as well as the submethod of demanding, which they use less often. The supervision method is the most frequently used method of prevention so as to monitor the behavior and development of children. They stated that they try to maintain contact with the children, as well as with parents who have better insights into their needs and challenges.

The third educational approach is disciplining and sanctioning. When it comes to disciplining, it is noticeable that muallims try to develop positive discipline in children; while on the other hand, their sanctioning approach is used as an exception in the process of upbringing. They use non-verbal gestures such as a warning look, shaking their head, or gently approaching a child who is distracting the class to give a sign that the child's behavior has been observed. Muallims also use verbal warning in case a child does not do the tasks or persists in the bad behavior. They try to reprimand individually, and sometimes in front of a group, so that it has a preventive effect on other children. The method of sanctioning is also rarely used by the teachers and only in exceptional situations. In doing so, they use procedures such as withholding attention or privileges, taking away objects, separating them from the group to do a task that they did not prepare in time, and giving them additional responsibilities. Physical bullying and emotional humiliation are absolutely unacceptable and not present in the maktab education/upbringing. The method of self-discipline is a frequently used method, where muallims try to develop children's responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They stated that they also apply the concept of restitution, where after a mistake, they agree with the child on an appropriate measure and method of compensating the consequences, while developing awareness of their own responsibility.

Of the forms of religious education of children, the examined muallims most often work within a larger or smaller educational group, otherwise working individually where there is a need and possibility for it. Only occasionally during the school year, they manage to organize educational work with the entire team.

Working with a larger/smaller educational group is the most common form of religious education among muallims. Children are divided into three levels, and then within each level they are grouped according to the level of knowledge, tasks, and interests. Individual educational work is used less often by teachers due to the large number of enrolled children, time constraints, and in most cases, a lack of professionally employed assistants in maktab teaching. They use individual work in teaching children Arabic script, reciting the Qur'an, working with children who are lagging behind or have difficulties in mastering the content, and teaching particularly gifted children.

Educational work with the collective is rarely used by muallims due to the previously mentioned limitations. Nevertheless, they try to organize common curricular and extracurricular activities in which all children enrolled in maktab participate, such as trips, excursions, ceremonies, celebrations, iftars, joint breakfasts and dinners, congregational prayers, opportunities to summarize what was learned during the school year, final exams, meetings with

parents, competitions, quizzes, joint actions, and social games. During the mentioned activities, children have the opportunity to get to know and learn from each other. When it comes to the work of the *muallims* in combined departments, they generally face similar challenges and limitations. Most often, they divide the participants into three levels, which are sometimes divided according to age, and otherwise according to the level of knowledge or the type of content (Ilmihal - textbook, Arabic Script - *sufara*, Qur'an). Some *muallims* divide children into the first group (first, second, and third grades), the second group (fourth, fifth and sixth grades), and the third group (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades). Other *muallims* divide the groups according to the level of knowledge, but in this case, they are heterogeneous according to age. Some *muallims* in the mosque organize three *halkas* (groups): the first (children who study the Qur'an), the second (children up to eight years old) and the third (children who study the Arabic script). In doing so, a *muallim* visits the groups, leads and controls the learning process, and engages the best student from the older group as an assistant in the youngest group. Child who learns the Qur'an best corrects other children during learning, and the children who finish presenting the lesson from the Arabic script return to one of the other two groups. Some *muallims* give different tasks to the groups, and then go around monitoring and directing their work. Other teachers use programmed teaching, according to which they prepare special materials for different groups and individual tasks for individual children.

CONCLUSION

The basic goal of the *maktab* education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to introduce the basics of Islamic teachings to children and prepare them for the practical living of Islam. Islamic religious education in *maktabs* plays an important role in building a positive, versatile, and complete personality of a child. The special role of religious education is reflected in the promotion of universal values, respect for basic educational principles, development of intrinsic motivation, awareness of the meaning and purpose of a child's life, satisfaction of basic needs, and socialization and internalization of the content and values. It can be concluded that, through methodical/didactical religious education work with children, it is possible to develop all areas of education and that this process runs simultaneously, building a complete personality of the child. It is apparent from the research that, although *muallims* try to develop all educational areas, they pay the most attention to intellectual and moral education. In the educational process, *muallims* respect the basic educational principles, with a note that the principles of individualization, versatility, and uniqueness are difficult to fully implement due to numerous limitations. When it comes to educational approaches and methods, it can be concluded that the prevailing approach is directed toward positive transformation and encouragement, the approach of prevention, and finally the approach of disciplining and sanctioning with the focus on developing self-discipline. In terms of the forms of religious education of children, *muallims* mostly use work with a larger or smaller educational group, then individual work, and rarely educational work with a collective due to the organizational structure of *maktab* education.

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