

Applying Islamic perspective on Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching Halal Management Program: An Overview

Aplicación de la perspectiva islámica sobre las habilidades de pensamiento crítico en la enseñanza Programa de gestión de Halal: una visión general

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ABSTRACT

Critical thinking in teaching plays a vital role in education. The Quran contains three times as many verses calling to engage in critical thinking rather than blind submission. In that sense, this conceptual paper discusses the applying Islamic perspective on critical thinking skills in teaching Halal Management Program at Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. It will also analyze how critical thinking can be applied to the students of Halal Management Program. This concept paper adopts a qualitative method where data were collected from doctrinal research. The paper provides suggestions that separate subject that teaches critical thinking should be introduced in university. Students' critical thinking can be improved implicitly through the lecture's methods and students'.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Teaching, Halal management

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RESUMEN

El pensamiento crítico en la enseñanza juega un papel vital en la educación. El Corán contiene tres veces más versos que llaman a participar en el pensamiento crítico en lugar de la sumisión ciega. En ese sentido, este artículo conceptual discute la aplicación de la perspectiva islámica sobre las habilidades de pensamiento crítico en la enseñanza del Programa de Administración Halal en la Academia de Estudios Islámicos Contemporáneos (ACIS) en la Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malasia. También analizará cómo se puede aplicar el pensamiento crítico a los estudiantes del Programa de Administración Halal. Este documento conceptual adopta un método cualitativo en el que se recopilieron datos de investigaciones doctrinales. El documento proporciona sugerencias sobre la introducción de materias separadas que enseñan el pensamiento crítico en la universidad. El pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes se puede mejorar implícitamente a través de los métodos de la clase y de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: pensamiento crítico, enseñanza, gestión halal

1. Introduction

Critical thinking means thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. Another way to describe it is reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. According to Edward De Bono (1976), the teaching of thinking is not the teaching of logic but the teaching of perception. Whenever anyone sets out to teach thinking there is a strong temptation to drift back into teaching logic, because this seems to be the only definite thing that can be taught.

That education's major concern, among others, should be to encourage students to think critically is commonplace today. No respectable educational institution, or one having pretensions to be respectable, can afford not to promote critical thinking, nor can a teacher be seen to be hostile to it. Critical thinking is the modern mantra that has everyone enthralled. It is touted as the miracle cure for much that ails both education and society. In fact, Islamic civilization's contribution to human civilization *tafakkur* and other Qur'anic words calling for people to think creatively and critically (Jamal & Mustafa, 2004).

Critical thinking means correct thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. A person who can think critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable one to live and act successfully in it.

As such, this conceptual paper tries to discuss the application of critical thinking for teaching Halal Management Program at Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. It will also discuss how critical thinking can be applied to the students of Halal Management Program.

2. Concept of Critical Thinking in Teaching

Previous studies have found that critical thinking students are influenced by the teachers' teaching pattern. (Nursafra Mohd Zhaffar, Mohd Isa Hamzah, 2016) Therefore, Islamic education teachers (IETs) should apply critical thinking in their teaching. For students, workers, and citizens, critical thinking is an essential tool for performing successfully in a complex and rapidly changing world.

In focusing on and promoting critical thinking, what type of education for human beings is helping to foster and what type of society is it helping to create? Critical thinking is a private, personal skill employed primarily to achieving private and personal goals. In other words, this is a skill which has no social components. (Kazmi, 2011)

Despite widespread expressions of concern on developing critical thinkers, studies have shown that most schools are neither challenging students to think critically about academic subjects nor helping them to develop the reasoning abilities needed to deal successfully with the complexities of modern life. Educators are not alone in recognizing the importance of critical thinking. The demands of employment in a global economy, the survival of a democratic way of life, and personal decision making in a complex and rapidly changing society require people who can reason well and make sound judgments. Therefore, the ability to think well is critical to an individual's success in life. (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2003)

Thinking could be taught and good thinking requires practice. Teachers in Malaysia are grappling with this issue in an effort to be forerunners in the country's drive to attain the status of an industrial country and a world center of educational excellence (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2000). A study conducted in Klang secondary schools by Suhailah (2000) looked at the relationships between teachers' perceptions and practices and the number of courses that they attended, on the teaching of thinking. She found that no significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions and practices respectively with respect to teachers' school locality, gender and areas of specialization but there were significant differences in perceptions and practices respectively with regard to the number of courses that teachers attended. However, their perceptions and practices became more positive when they attended more courses on the teaching of thinking. Generally, teachers in this study have good perceptions of the approaches and methods in teaching thinking, and on the importance and usefulness of teaching thinking. (Ashour & Alkhoudary, 2015)

Proper perceptions and knowledge about teaching critical thinking among pre-service teachers should be given considerable attention. This study indicates that the mathematics pre-service teachers from a local public university have not acquired a strong grasp of teaching critical thinking. Hence, it is suggested that pre-service teachers should be given more opportunities to be exposed to critical thinking, so that they can prepare themselves well before teaching their students. Courses or workshops on critical thinking ought to be conducted frequently for pre-service teachers to help them to use appropriate instructional methods and overcome the problems faced during teaching on critical thinking. By doing so, critical thinking among the students can also be improved (Chan, Tun, & Onn, 2016).

However, the present study revealed some shortcomings about English teaching and learning in Benin. In fact, the current English curriculum does not thoroughly prepare the learners to face challenges awaiting them in the ever-changing world and especially their communities. From the above findings and discussion, the researcher can assume EFL teachers agree on the idea that teaching thinking skills to their learners can help them be effectively prepared to deal with social issues affecting their community. (Gbènakpon, 2017)

3. An Islamic Perspective on Critical Thinking

In the Qur'an, Allah SWT mentions clearly in Surah sad: "(Here is) a Book, which We sent down unto thee, full of blessing that they may meditate on its Signs and that men of understanding may receive admonition". (Surah Sad 38:29). Thinking is considered as *'Ibadah'* or a form of worshipping Allah, which, shall be rewarded as long as it is done with sincerity or *'ikhlas'*, good intention and for a good purpose. Abbas Al-*'aqad'*, a contemporary prominent thinker, considers *'tafkir'* or thinking as an Islamic obligation. Al-Qur'an mentions the requirement of *'ulul al-bab'* that leads to thinking. Thinking is an integral part of the Islamic tradition. Allah created man to think by using reasoning (*afala ya'qilun*), think creatively (*afala tatafaqquharun*) and also to ponder, to inquire and to investigate things (*afala ya tadabbarun*). The tradition of thinking in the past led to tremendous achievements of the Muslims in the fields of philosophy and science such as astrophysics, mathematics, mechanics, music and many others. (Sidek, 2005)

In Islam, a teacher is viewed as *'murabbi'*, that is, one who holds an important responsibility in educating their students, not just the knowledge of the mundane world, but also the way of living according to the Laws of Allah (Suhailah, 2000). In fact, critical thinking in the Islamic perspective is very important because it will make Muslims to think reflectively so that they can relate the proof of creation in giving life and will make them closer to Allah. Thinking critically also will develop man's thinking to differentiate

between good and bad things in their lives. So, Muslims should take Al-Qur'an as the guidance because it draws the attention of mankind to reflect upon the creation of this universe. As mentioned by Endut et al (2014), the significance of *al-yaqin* element in connection with Islamic critical thinking is closely related to these two contexts of certainty. The methodological context that focuses on the practical and logical aspect of *al-yaqin* would naturally deal with the analytical process of knowledge verification and evaluation which is known to be an essential aspect of critical thinking. Meanwhile, for a Muslim, the meaning of 'to seek understanding' is closer to seek understanding to know Allah.

Several signs have been shown by Allah in His Holy Book. In the Quran, Allah asks Muslim to think critically in His Holy Book, among them are: (Nordin & Surajudeen, 2015)

a) *Tadhakkur*

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with thought): *"Our Lord! Not for naught have you created (all) this! Glory to Allah! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire"*. (Surah Ali Imran 3: 190-191) This ayah illustrates that thinking people will ponder the creations of Allah (the sky and the earth, the night and the day) by using their heart (*basirah*). Therefore, people will see the Great of Allah and grateful to Allah every time. Imam Fakhru Razi claimed that those who are remember and believe in Oneness of God use their *aqal* (think) will achieve *al-falah* (success). To achieve the level of *tadhakkur*, man needs to put something into summarization in order to help him understand it wisely. Therefore, man may have an idea towards something in a simple diagram or picture. The application of *tadhakkur* is applicable on subjects such as Al-Quran and al-Hadith.

b) *Taqil*.

"Do you enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet you study the Scripture? Will you not understand?" (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 44). This show that the Almighty God emphasizes on a few mankind those who are asked others to follow the Law of Allah, but he himself refuse to do so. Some *mufassirun* stated that this kind of people refer to Bani Israel and Hypocrites. Allah condemned these kinds of people by saying *"Will you understand?"* which bring us the word "do not think" refer to "do not understand the truth". In order to understand the truth, man need to synthesize the information at the first place before jump to the conclusion.

c) *Tafakkur*.

Tafakkur literally means to think on a subject deeply, systematically, and in great detail. In other word, *tafakkur* is a reflection. Reflection is a vital step in becoming aware of what is going on around us and of drawing conclusions from it. It is a key for a man to differentiate between good and bad, vice and virtue, and so on. One can use reflection in every scientific field. However, the rational and experimental sciences are only a first step or a means to reach the final target of reflection, which is knowledge of God, provided that one's mind has not been filled with wrong conceptions and premises. Reflection must be based on and start with belief in God as the Originator of creation. *"And it is Who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two: He draw the night as a veil over the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are Signs for those who consider"* (Surah ar-Ra'd 13: 3)

d) *Tafqih*.

"Many are Jinns and men we have made for Hell: They have hearts where with they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning)." (Surah al-A'raf 7: 179) Based on this ayah, we know that there is a relationship between heart and mind. According to Imam al-Ghazali, *al-qalb* (heart) depends on *al-'aqal* (mind). He claimed that once man would like to do right thing, he will ask his mind to see the Great of Allah. At this level, man need to analyze the information after identifying two difference entities. Man will identify the right and wrong, advantage and disadvantage, positive and negative element that reflect to something.

e) *Tadabbur*.

“Do they not consider the Quran (with care)? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy”. (Surah an-Nisa’ 4: 82) The development of *tadabbur* understanding is essential to critical thinking because critical thinking by definition involves reflecting on what is known and how that knowledge is justified. They know what they think and can justify why. The word of *tadabbur* means learn and understand al-Quran completely which is knows the law of Islam and believes all the contents. Allah emphasizes al-Quran is a complete book because it came from Allah. This is the higher level where man judges the idea.

The Qur’an was revealed to those who recite it or listen to its verses will contemplate and reflect upon its messages. This reflection leads to appreciation of Allah’s creation, self-tranquility, remembrance of Allah, reminding the thinker of his ‘obligations’ and the requirements to fulfill them and observations study and exploration of the universe. This leads to the discovery of the governing of the universe, which has been made subservient to mankind for cultivation of earth and establishment of civilization. (Jamal & Mustapha, 2005)

4. Teacher’s application of the Teaching Critical

Thinking

Among the challenges faced by educators in promoting critical thinking is that of cultural compatibility (Charlene Tan, 2017). Teachers’ response to questionnaire supports the idea of integrating critical thinking in teaching the writing skills at BUC. Thus, teachers should use thinking skills to enhance students’ writing performance and creativity (Ashour & Alkhoudary, 2015). In fact, one major finding is that Islamic teachers view students’ ability as a constraint towards improving critical thinking, specifically students’ lack of interest in practicing critical thinking. Islamic teachers and curriculum developers take students’ resistance of practicing difficult activities and active learning into their account. In addition, they should understand the different learning styles, age level of the students, psychological characteristics of students; student’s learning aptitude, appropriate teaching method, and theoretical orientation of critical thinking in the elementary schools. Moreover, they should motivate and encourage students to challenge themselves to reach a sound conclusion (Alwadai, 2014).

According to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, recently he called for the country’s education system to focus on developing intellectual capital, saying the effort was necessary to equip the future generations with the higher order of thinking skills. In the future, the younger generation would have to occupy jobs which might not exist today, and the challenge of the country was to find ways to prepare them for that scenario, he said at the Premier Assembly of Outstanding Teachers 2012 at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (Nordin & Surajudeen, 2015). So that in order to enhance students’ critical thinking skills, lecturers in halal management at Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies also should encourage students to think critically and creatively by using appropriate teaching methods and styles in lectures and classrooms.

Findings by Alex Jone (2015) revealed that doing the Negotiation Role Play (NRP) increased the participants’ level of critical thinking while the team leadership and team leadership profile (the diverse mixed-group) did not have a moderating effect on the NRP and impact the level of critical thinking skills. The results of the present study on students’ perceptions toward using classroom debate to develop critical thinking and oral communication ability indicate that, students found classroom debate an innovative, interesting, constructive, and helpful approach to teaching and learning. The respondents also believed that participating in classroom debate helped them overcome the fear of talking before a crowd, boost their confidence to talk and express their opinions, improve their speaking ability, and enhance their critical thinking skills (Pezhman Zare, 2015).

Study by Zydi (2016) in Albania showed that landscape architecture is a complex, contextual, and interdisciplinary profession. Especially during the second half of last century, this profession gained advantages by using of natural sciences knowledge on landscapes. The success of the new generation of landscape architects will be very much dependent on the development and consolidation of the above mentioned foundations. Aiming to achieve this, the curricula of landscape architecture should

promote creative thinking, critical thinking and systemic thinking. (Zydi et al, 2016) however, many compelling reasons exist for teaching critical thinking skills to students; however, the gaps between teacher knowledge, ability levels, and teaching critical thinking skills effectively to students can only be identified and closed with proper training and time (Skaggs, 2014). Students' experience building and applying critical thinking skills in lingua-culturology was emergent, uncertain, and their use of the strategies was subject to revision; it was concerned with what students already knew, and was created in cooperation rather than being a product solely of the author's or teacher's effort (Meiramowa et al, 2017).

5. Conclusion

In all, this concept paper has aimed to describe Islamic perspective on critical thinking skills in teaching. According to the reviews of this study, students have positive perceptions on critical thinking and believed that some lecturers practiced critical thinking in the classroom.

Some ways of improvement found in this study for halal management program such as separate subject that teaches critical thinking should be introduced in university. In fact, lecture's methods such as telling stories, collaborative learning and skill-centered. Students' thinking is developed when critical thinking is used as strategies in one or a few steps of the lesson development. Furthermore, the appropriate textbook for the enhancement of teaching critical thinking. Teaching critical is important to help improve to help improve students' achievement

However, further studies in quantitative research need to be done.

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