

ISLAMIC THEORITICAL MODEL FOR CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

From the time of previous Muslim Scholars to contemporary concerns about the need and ability to think critically and to reason well has been regarded as an important and necessary outcome of education in relation to quality work-force. In the 21st century, learning to think should be central purpose of education. The best learners do not memorize random bits and pieces of information. On one hand, the literature posits that learning should be problem or question-based (Paul & Elder, 2006). On the other hand, interest in developing and teaching thinking skills among students, especially at the tertiary level, have been explicitly expressed by the government as well as the private sectors since the last few decades. This has been clearly stated in the National Education Policy, as well as in the mission and vision statements of all the institutions of higher learning in the country. At the level of secondary education, it is stated that the policy should place more emphasis on critical and creative thinking skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2005). Schools should produce students who are able to think, act, and handle situations or problems intelligently, and this is possible only if their thinking and problem solving skills are developed (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2009). With a special reference to Islamic Model of Thinking, teachers would be able to create the best method on their teaching. This study aims at describing a model for improving students' thinking in learning Islamic education. It also aims to explore how this model fulfils our responsibility as teachers of Islamic education and its contributions social and intellectual spheres of learners' personality. It will also discover on the importance of thinking in Islam and the positive impacts of their life in maintaining peace in society. The outcome of this study will assist Muslim teachers to carry out their responsibility in a better way which is expected to correspond with the Islamic worldview.

Keywords: *Islamic Theoretical Model, Critical Thinking, Teaching, Islamic Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education in Malaysia formulated the National Education Philosophy with the aim of producing a good and balanced individual. The integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (KBSM), being the mechanism to realize the National Education Philosophy, emphasizes the development of the self. Its curriculum content includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values which are necessary to develop the potentials of a student in a holistic and integrated manner so that he will become a balanced person intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. These four aspects are not disparate. Each is related to the other. A balanced person should be able to think, be, feel and do "good" intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically. However, for this discussion we may focus more on the intellectual aspects helps to receive valuable and useful knowledge; to develop thinking abilities, arithmetic skills, problem solving skills, reasoning, communication and interaction, and others. These particular aspects require teachers to teach thinking and develop thinking skills among their students especially in teaching and learning Islamic Education.

2. DEFINITION OF THINKING

Thinking skill is a vital element for a country to prepare young generations in the future. For Fisher (1993) thinking is involved in any mental activity that helps to formulate or solve a problem, to make a decision or to seek understanding. Meanwhile, for a Muslim, meaning of 'to seek understanding' is closer to seek understanding to know Allah. 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.

"How do we prepare them for jobs that do not exist? The answer is that we cannot because we do not know the types of job that do not exist yet. We can only prepare them in terms of their capacity to think ... (to take them to) the higher order of thinking skills. This is to make them not only sharp and in-depth in their thinking but also to be creative and innovative, so that they have the flexibility to adapt to any situation that may arise."

(New Straits Times, July 2012)

3. CRITICAL THINKING

For this discussion, we might focus more on critical thinking skill, instead of creative thinking, higher-order thinking, lower-order thinking, deductive thinking, inductive thinking, rational and analogy thinking (Rajendran, 2010). Critical thinking, as the term is generally used, roughly means *reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do*. According to Fisher (1993), he concludes critical thinking describes how something is being thought about. According to Reed (1998), she promoted for students, workers, and citizens, critical thinking is an essential tool for performing successfully in a complex and rapidly changing world.

In Malaysia, several efforts have been taken in order to encourage critical thinking across the curriculum. For secondary education, Ministry of Education Malaysia (2005) stated the policy to place more emphasis on critical and creative thinking skills. At the 2005 education summit, the Ministry of Education Malaysia identified the need for a substantial increase in "the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively,

and solve problems". To a public figure, including Muhyiddin Yassin (2010), says on a media *"training in critical thinking should be the primary task of education."*

The issue of abolishment of UPSR and PMR on July 2010 also indicated to the country that exam-oriented has no more implemented and should be replaced by critical thinking oriented. Furthermore, Islamic Education is not only memorizing the fact, unless it is more than that; encourages students to analyze the facts.

4. THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Man is endowed with the faculty of reason, called *'aql*. This is the faculty by which the rational soul recognizes and distinguishes truth from falsehood, (Rosnani, 2004). Allah stated in the Holy Book of Quran about thinking.

"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 the thought):"

(Surah A'ali Imran: 190 – 191)

In this ayah, Allah mentioned about *Ulul al-Albab*, those who are find out the truth by using *Qalb* (heart). *Aql* (mind) and *Qalb* (heart) should be interrelated in every single aspects of life. On the other hand, Al-Ghazali also provides the theory of epistemology to the Muslim as a reference for the future. What is interesting in his meaningful knowledge is about thinking. He divides the knowledge and science into two; everlasting and impermanent. The everlasting knowledge came from Allah, meanwhile, impermanent knowledge come from man whether it is the result of research or previous experiences. To him, the impermanent knowledge endowed by Allah naturally come from *aqal*. He defines thinking as a qualification of man that enable individual to make an assumption towards something that human being thinking.

Islamic civilization was built by people with initiative, imagination, and creativity who were interested in constructing creative lives and forging good relationships with others. It was only when these leaders encountered difficulties that they consulted religious scholars.

According to Mattson (2010):

"Legal reasoning—evens the best legal reasoning—is not the solution to our problems. Why are we Muslims still in the situation in which we find ourselves? Our problems are not going to be solved by having scholars think more deeply. If we limit change and innovation to only those who have qualifications to reason from the text, we are not going to get anywhere."

The Quranic term *ya'qilu* (rationalizing) and *yufakkiru* (thinking) in the present form which are repeated (more than 20 times) in the holy Quran denote the importance of thinking activity in education process, Rosnani & Suhailah (2003). Al-Quran and thinking cannot be separated. Thus, Mahyuddin Ashaari (2010) tried to provide an article that attempt to relate how Quranic learning can inculcate the thinking skills. He proposed that by reading the Holy Book of Allah, people do not just read, but also should know the translation and think the ayah.

This was supported by Ahmad Mohd Said (2001) who is responsible to touch upon the potential of Quranic Learning to encourage thinking. KBSM is concentrating on the balancing of

intellectual, practical, confidential and sincerity. In term of pedagogy, it emphasize on the teaching of cognitive, affective and psychomotor, which are contribute to a positive impact to the students. He proposed Islamic Education should develop human potential towards critical thinking, inculcating *adab* and transmitting cultures. It means that education should be able to bear thinking skills, analyzing, and synthesizing.

The nature of Islamic education is emphasizing its followers to think and ponder the creatures of Allah. Allah had mentioned about thinking in the holy Quran for several time. For instance, in (Quran 52: 20-21):

“On the earth are signs for those of assured faith. As also in your own selves; will ye not then see?”

Based on this ayah, men are asked to use their *‘Aql* for several times in order to assure their faith. Another evidences showed about the important of critical thinking in Islamic Education stated in the Holy Quran, such as in (Surah Yunus 10:24), (Surah Ali Imran 3:190), (Surah al-Tur 52:20-21), (Surah Sad 38:29), and (Surah Yusuf 12:111).

Men need to be critical in thinking because the teaching of Islam is not fixed but adjustable according to the circumstances. The teachings are in a form of principles not fixed. That is why in Islam, Muslims can do the *Ijtihad* and *Ijtihad* is a type of critical thinking. Beside, Rosnani & Suhailah (2003), add that *Ijtihad* as a critical thinking modality in Islamic Education. They concluded that education in Islam is not just about learning, but educating Muslims to think and perform their responsibility as servants and stewards of the Almighty God. In the Quran, Allah asks Muslims to read His signs. They bring several terms that have been found in the Quran such as *fakkara* (to think), *faqih* (to understand), *dabbara* (to consider), *‘aqala* (to think), and *fahima* (to understand) in considering to the importance of thinking.

The important of thinking was not mentioned in Quran only, but it was stated in the *Sunnah*. Fauzi (2004) provided an article about the hindrances that obstruct man from thinking critically based on writer’s examination of the sources of Prophet Tradition or *Sunnah*. For him, after referring some *hadiths* in the light of *tawhidic* paradigm, it could be concluded that the Prophet made a lot of efforts to educate his Companions in particular and Muslims in general on how to avoid those hindrances that could obstruct them to become critical thinkers. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seemed to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative reasoning.

However, Qader, Hossien & Gholamreza (2012) found that most testing activities for Islamic Education students focus more on recalling and understanding principles and concepts. He claimed that type of learning in Islamic Education is limited to a shallow level and critical thinking is not emphasized or evaluated. Studies have found that among the factors that lead to this problem are teacher are not concern with student potential as mentioned in KBSM which that student are not encouraged to voice out their ideas during teaching and learning session. Furthermore, teaching and learning process more merely focusing on memorizing facts. There is no chance for students to think. Indeed, more activities towards memorization will give negative impact on student. This is because they are just memorize and could not understand exactly what they learned. As a result, performances of Islamic Education also tend to be low compare to other subjects. This is happen because of low level of critical thinking in this subject. Research done by Zaharah (1995) supported that Islamic Education text books for the Upper Secondary level have incorporated critical and creative thinking skills activities but were poor on decision making skills.

Several researches have been done in order to measure students' critical thinking aptitude especially in teaching and learning Islamic Education. For instance, some researchers claimed that College-level Islamic Studies courses provide rich and frequent opportunities to develop skills and dispositions needed for higher order thinking, yet instructors of introductory Islamic Studies courses, like faculty of Arabic Language and Civilization, often fail to challenge students explicitly to develop reasoning abilities. Yet in many introductory courses, primary source documents are used rarely or not at all. When they are assigned, they are often taught in a static manner and are seen by students as another source of "facts" to memorize for an exam question rather than as a basis for developing higher order thinking skills. It happens to another courses like History for example, even instructors who assign primary source documents for the purpose of developing critical thinking skills and encouraging students to "think like historians" often fail to accomplish their objective unless they explicitly teach skills of historical thinking. Thus, it could be happen on Islamic History (*Sirah*) too.

In sum, researcher concluded that every student whether they were from different field, they still need skill of critical thinking in order to promote *ijtihad* in their life. It also called us for creative and critical thinking in life but still in a right path (Al-Quran and *Hadith*). Therefore, reforming Muslim educational systems is also essential, including revising the curricula of religious institution especially in Malaysia.

5. ISLAMIC THEORITICAL MODEL FOR CRITICAL THINKING

The formulation of model in critical thinking studies is generally associated with research in the process used by the practitioners to student attitudes. Model can be defined as a set of subject and predictions and how it is interrelated. It also uses (a system or procedure) as an example to follow or imitate. Some defines model as a simplified version of concept or phenomenon. Thus, how does critical thinking connect to this achievement? Each of the five elements of Islamic Thinking – *Tadabbur, Tafkih, Tafakkur, Ta'qil* and *Tadhakkur* - is central to Critical Thinking. Rosnani (2004) also mentioned the frequent appearance of terms such as *fakkara* (to think), *faqiha* (to understand), *dabbara* (to consider), *'aqala* (to think), and *fahima* (to understand) in the Quran are terms that mean thinking.

TAWHID OF GOD

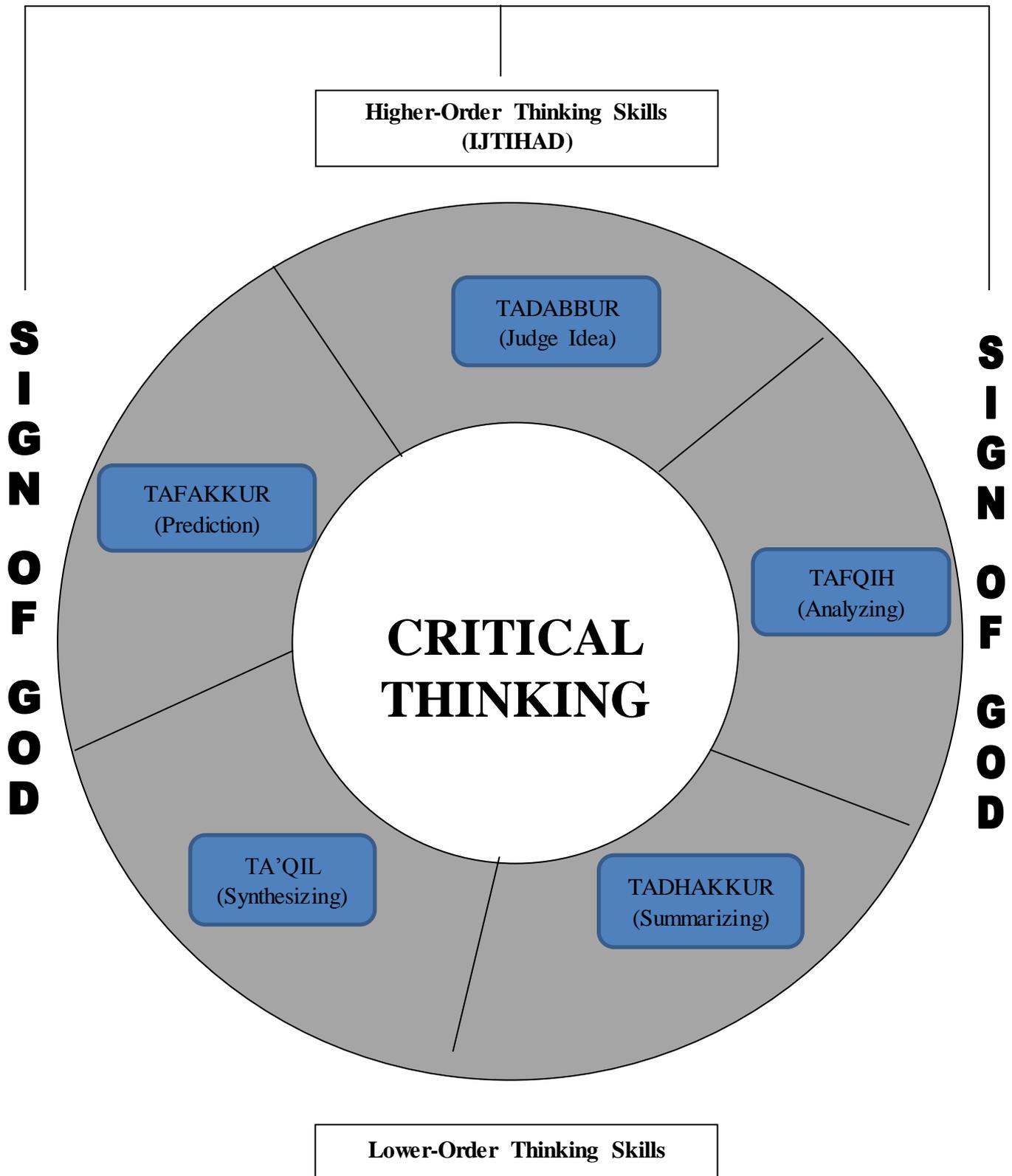


Figure 1: Islamic Theoretical Model of Thinking Skills

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:

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 dan al-Hadith.

b) *Ta’qil*.

“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 *Mufasssirun* 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 knowl edge 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 6the 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 in 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.

6. THE CONCEPT OF IJTIHAD

The great combination of *ta’qil* (to think), *tadhakkur* (to remember), *tafakkur* (to think deeply), *tadabbur* (to consider) and *tafqi*h (understand) may produces *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is a representative for Higher- Order Thinking Skill that might be reflects to the Tawhid of Allah. A hadith may support this reflection:

“Those who know himself, he may know his God”

Rosnani (2004) claimed that if the religious subjects depended greatly on the method of understanding and memorization, the ‘secular’ subjects opened opportunity for the exercise of the intellect. Thus, she asked us to make the subjects possible to analyze, interpret, synthesis, and

evaluate data. Rather, she criticized some religious teachers and leaders, those who are delivering the religious subjects with the idea that “door of *ijtihad* is closed.”

On March 19, 2004, the United States Institute of Peace and the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy cosponsored a workshop entitled “*Ijtihad*: Reinterpreting Islamic Principles for the Twenty first Century” called Muslim to strive for *Ijtihad*. Among the summarizations that can relate to thinking were:

- Most scholars would limit the practice of *ijtihad* to specialists who have not only knowledge of the Qur’an and the hadiths but also broad familiarity with a wide range of modern scholarship in Arabic grammar, logic, philosophy, economics, and sociology.
- Muslim scholars and leaders in the United States and other Western societies have particular opportunities as well as a responsibility to lead a revival of *ijtihad*. Muslim scholars in the West have the freedom to think creatively while still being faithful to the texts, and their new interpretations could stimulate new thinking among the more traditional religious establishments in Muslim countries.

Table 1:

Level	Core Element	Keyword	Subject/ Course
<i>Tadabbur</i>	JUDGE IDEA	Conclude, Summarize	Al-Quran, Tasawwuf
<i>Tafakkur</i>	PREDICTION	Invent, Hypothesis, Construct	Sirah, Arabic Language
<i>Tafqih</i>	ANALYZING	Analyze, Inquire, Experiment	Syariah, Fiqh
<i>Ta’qil</i>	SYNTHESIZING	Interpret, Infer, Explain, Predict, Generalize	Akidah, Theology Islam
<i>Tadhakkur</i>	SUMMARIZING	Memorize	Al-Quran, Hadith

7. CONCLUSION

Educators who wish to foster critical thinking, I have suggested, stand to gain from conceptualizing students’ potential for critical thinking in a development framework of what is likely to follow. This paper, I hope, will prove a useful starting point to educators seeking a bridge, one enabling them to draw on empirical data on how Islamic Education students’ thinking skill develop, as a means of enriching their visions of good practices.

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