

Analyzing the Practice of Critical Thinking Skills for Islamic Education Students in the International Campus


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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: October 10, 2023</p> <p>Revised: November 11, 2023</p> <p>Accepted: December 09, 2023</p> <p>Published: December 23, 2023</p> <p>Keyword: Critical Thinking Skills, Faculty members, Undergraduate students, Higher Order Thinking</p> <p>Copyright (c) 2024 Pandang Margatama; Tahraoui Ramdane, Muhammad Wildan Shohib</p> 	<p>Critical thinking is one of the most important goals of any educational system. Previous research has indicated that Malaysian educational institutions are still unable to meet the goals of instructional pedagogy in the classroom, particularly in terms of improving critical thinking abilities. The purpose of this study is to examine the practice of critical thinking skills among undergraduate students from the perspective of faculty members. This study is qualitative in nature since it focuses on individuals' experiences and impressions of a specific programs from their own viewpoints. Data was gathered through interviews with faculty members who teach Islamic Education undergraduate students at the Kulliyah of Education (KOED), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The findings of the study revealed that practicing critical thinking abilities improved the students' learning experiences. According to the informants' response, a critical thinking skill is the student's ability to gather knowledge and explain his or her thoughts in order to solve difficulties. Similarly, students may exercise critical thinking abilities by developing higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving skills, reflection skills, and synthesis skills. Moreover, the study recommends further investigations on the practice of critical thinking skills not only for undergraduate students but also for other postgraduate students, particularly at the Kulliyah of Education (KOED), IIUM. It also suggests that management educational institutions offer intensive programs to help students strengthen their critical thinking abilities.</p>
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Introduction

The argument about the need for critical thinking skills has always been an important issue in the modern educational system. The younger generation today must be equipped with critical thinking skills. This involves building their capacity to think and developing their intellectual capital so that they have the flexibility to respond to any challenges that may arise (Fisher, 2011). Furthermore, according to Badi & Tajdin (2005), a person who can think critically, ask questions, gather relevant information, and sort the information may achieve the highest level of higher-order thinking skills.

To provide a workable definition of critical thinking, a group of scientists who joined the Delphi panel managed by Facione in 1990 defined critical thinking as “self-regulatory judgement that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evident, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgement is based” (P. A. Facione, 1990). Moreover, Facione & Facione (2013) added that critical thinking comprises six skills: interpretation, analysis, inference, explanation, evaluation, and self-regulation.

Recent studies in Western and European countries indicate that students in higher educational institutions score low on critical thinking skills (Guest, 2000). Numerous studies have been done to identify the decline in the level of students’ critical thinking skills, particularly in the system where the schools focus on the mastery of subject materials. Moreover, developing students’ critical thinking skills has become a major concern for educators and educational practitioners today. Therefore, they began studying the influencing factors that contribute to the acquisition and development of critical thinking skills (Abdullah, 2010).

The growing recognition of the importance of critical thinking in preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary world has spurred educators and educational practitioners to delve deeper into the factors influencing the acquisition and development of these skills. Beyond the classroom setting, societal and cultural factors may play a pivotal role in shaping the critical thinking abilities of students. For instance, the prevalence of information overload and the rapid pace of technological advancements may hinder students from engaging in reflective and analytical thinking. Consequently, there is a pressing need for educational institutions to adapt their curricula and teaching methodologies to better nurture critical thinking skills amid these evolving challenges.

In response to these concerns, various educational initiatives and interventions have been proposed and implemented to enhance critical thinking skills among students. Some advocate for a more interdisciplinary approach, integrating critical thinking exercises into a diverse range of subjects to encourage students to apply their analytical skills across different domains. Others emphasize the importance of fostering a classroom environment that encourages open dialogue, questioning, and problem-solving, providing students with opportunities to practice and refine their critical thinking abilities in real-world scenarios. As educators and researchers continue to explore effective strategies, it is essential to consider the dynamic nature of critical thinking and adapt educational practices to ensure students are equipped with the skills necessary for success in the complex and rapidly changing landscape of the 21st century.

Therefore, critical thinking skills have become a great concern among current academic staff, educators, and teachers, as well as psychologists. They play a significant

role in developing the students' critical thinking skills in their respective institutions. Hence, the top management should formulate strategies to produce students who are able to think, act, and handle situations well. This will not be possible unless their critical thinking skills are established (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2003). Therefore, this study focuses on the faculty's perspective on the practice of critical thinking skills among undergraduate Islamic education students at Kulliyah of Education-IIUM.

Research Method

The approach chosen in this study is based on a descriptive qualitative research design. The descriptive nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to describe the experiences of the participants, which will either sustain or confront the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based (Traore & Meyer, 2001). In this research, the descriptive qualitative approach has been employed to discover ISED faculty members' reflections and perceptions on the undergraduate ISED students' practice of critical thinking skills at KOED, IIUM. This means that the best way to express those perceptions and reflections would be through an interview session with semi-structured interview questions related to ISED faculty members' practice and experience with ISED undergraduate students at KOED, IIUM.

The research population in this study consists of three (3) faculty members of KOED from Islamic Education, from which three faculty members were selected as a sample for this study. All of the selected participants are teaching students who pursue the Islamic Education undergraduate programme.

For data collection, the instruments of this study consisted of a set of interview questions that covered the objectives of the inquiry. Moreover, the instrument was developed by the researcher based on an extensive review of the literature on critical thinking skills. To validate the research instrument, the researcher sent the interview questions to the three experts who are competent in both research methodology and area of specialization for further examination and review. The interview questions were then revised and approved by the supervisor based on the suggestions and feedback from the experts. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity of the research instrument and to allow necessary adjustments before conducting the actual interviews.

During the data collection, the researcher obtained several qualitative data points to explain the faculty's reflections and perspectives on the practice of critical thinking skills among KOED's undergraduate students specializing in Islamic Education (ISED). According to Banfield & Cayago-Gicain (2006), qualitative data analysis is concerned with data collection, organizing it, breaking it down to manage items, synthesizing it, looking for patterns, discovering what is important and what is better to be learned, and what one will decide to tell others.

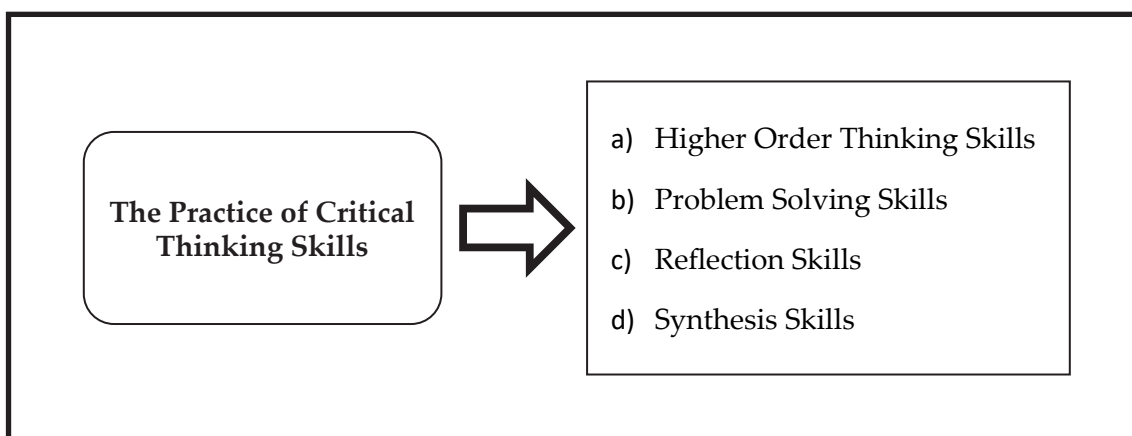
The data collected was in document formats, video recordings, interview notes, and audiotapes. Afterwards, the details from open-ended interviews were transcribed, translated, analyzed, and evaluated. The qualitative research results were extracted from personal interviews with three (3) faculty members.

For data analysis, the results of the interview with the three (3) faculty members were evaluated, analyzed and transcribed verbatim. The details of the data were then organized, categorized, and coded (Petty et al., 2012). In the data analysis process, the

researcher reads every sentence transcribed line by line while transcribing the audio and video recording data using coding software. The subjects were defined together with coding as a method of labeling, gathering, and organizing the data and reporting patterns (themes). Finally, all the data collected from the instrument was analyzed in line with the objective of the study.

Result and Discussion

The current study is to explore the practice of critical thinking skills among undergraduate students who are specialized in Islamic Education at the Kulliyah of Education, IIUM from the perspectives of the faculty members who teach the same specialization. This section discusses results related to research question: *How do the Faculty members perceive the practice of critical thinking skills among Undergraduate Islamic Education students?* To answer this question few themes were identified from the data as illustrated in the following diagram.



The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (PPPM 2013–2015) by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) makes it clear that critical thinking skills is used in this way of teaching by putting a lot of stress on developing critical, creative, innovative, and highly skilled human capital. Developing individuals who can compete in the social, cultural, and economic progress of the nation will have an impact on this development plan (Sirat, 2010).

The use of critical thinking skills in the education system is increasingly developing as a guide and indicator for the development of competent and high-quality human resources in the future. Therefore, every theory and contemporary educational practices place a greater emphasis on developing critical thinking skills. Every learning process should start with faculty members being able to and feeling confident about using critical thinking skills to make their lessons more relevant. Critical thinking skills is important for handling problems and for building other cognitive skills like recognizing problems, comparing things, sorting things into groups, and figuring out what caused something as well as in trying hypotheses and making decisions (Maryuningsih et al., 2019).

The utilization of critical thinking skills in the classroom has become increasingly popular, especially at the International Islamic University Malaysia, where it is acknowledged as an essential tool for developing competent, high-caliber human

resources ready to face the challenges of the future. Modern educational theories and methods, which emphasise how crucial it is to develop critical thinking abilities, reflect this emphasis. One of the most important aspects of this paradigm shift is that it gives faculty members the ability to apply critical thinking skills with confidence throughout their teaching endeavours, which guarantees the relevance and efficacy of their courses.

The integration of critical thinking skills in higher education goes beyond teaching subject-specific knowledge; it also involves fostering an attitude that motivates students to approach obstacles analytically and reach well-informed conclusions. Identifying issues, evaluating alternatives, classifying data, and determining causes are essential elements of critical thinking that enable learners to become skilled problem solvers. According to a study by Maryuningsih et al. (2019), critical thinking abilities are complex and have a role in decision-making, hypothesis testing, and problem-solving. Students' overall growth is greatly aided by the expression and use of these talents, which provide them with the mental tools needed to succeed in school and beyond.

Additionally, the International Islamic University Malaysia is actively involved in ongoing studies and projects that aim to improve and broaden the use of critical thinking abilities in a variety of subject areas. Since there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to teaching critical thinking, attempts are made to customise instructional strategies to the particular cultural and socioeconomic setting of the institution. The university's dedication to developing critical thinking skills is evidence of its commitment to producing graduates who are not just information receptacles but also skilled thinkers who can navigate the complexities of our globalised world, especially as the educational landscape continues to changes (Ibrahim, 2020).

The faculty members who teach ISED students at the Kulliyyah of Education, IIUM, were found to perceive critical thinking skills as the ability of the student to collect information, express his/her thoughts, and solve problems. They agreed that through the acquisition of higher order thinking skills, problem solving skills, reflection skills and synthesis skills, undergraduate students specializing in Islamic Education at the Kulliyyah of Education IIUM are able to practice critical thinking skills.

Higher Order Thinking Skill

Higher-order thinking is a level of thought that involves a mental process of finding answers that have not been determined beforehand and requires proper judgment based on certain criteria (Resnick, 1987). The faculty members perceive that through the practice of higher-order thinking skills, students are able to learn beyond basic observation of facts and memorization, and as skills, they are considered the most crucial in developing critical thinking skills. These skills not only emphasize on memorization and understanding of the content, but higher order thinking skills improve students' critical thinking by synthesizing, analyzing and evaluating information. Abduhzen (2018) states that higher order thinking is neither a subject nor an exam question. Higher order thinking skills is the ultimate objective that is attained through learning strategies, processes, and methods. Moreover, these thoughts are activated when individuals face the uncertainties, questions, or dilemmas that not an ordinary.

As the informant state that higher order thinking skills can be developed through active learning and student-centered learning such as project-based learning or by the

lecture' active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating higher order thinking skills-oriented learning. In other words, to develop higher order thinking skills, students should be actively involved in the learning activities that support the development of higher order thinking skills (Abosalem, 2015). This also suggests is that the teacher's role is of significance in the development of students' higher order thinking skills.

Setiawan et al., (2018) concluded that students improve their critical thinking skills through the implementation of higher order thinking skills in the teaching and learning in school. It is vital to develop higher order thinking to ease 21st century critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the higher order thinking skills developed in this study should be able to solve problems with the practice of critical thinking.

The faculty members stated higher order thinking skill is a skill that students in the 21st-century must have in order to be prepared to address numerous challenges in the future, it comprises of evaluation skill, analysis skill and synthesis skill.

A. Evaluation Skill

Evaluation is another reflection of the practice of higher order thinking skills. This statement in line with Petress, (2006) stated that one of the skills in implementing higher order thinking of the students is through evaluation skills. Informant believe that when the students implement the evaluation skills, they are able to evaluate the information resulted from the observation and experience to establish their beliefs and action before taking the decision. In addition, when students demonstrate abilities to evaluate a situation or a topic at hand that shows that they think critically. Conklin (2005) evaluation involves judging the value of materials and methods for various purposes.

The faculty members views that there are several processes in practicing regarding evaluation skills, including: First, assess on the solution, idea, and methodology by using appropriate criteria or standard exists to make sure its effectiveness; Second, hypothesize, criticize, and investigate; Third, approve or reject a statement according to the stated criteria.

B. Analysis Skill

For analysis skill, the faculty members perceive that the skill is part of the critical thinking skills in practices. In applying analysis skill, the faculty members make higher order thinking class activity such as discussion group, presentation, problem-based learning, and project-based learning. This statement in line with J.L.S. et al., (2018) stated that higher order learning activities, such as discussion, presentation and project-based learning can be used to execute learning that will engage students critical thinking.

To the practice of analysis skills, the faculty members asks the students to analyze the topic in the course and the students can relate the materials to the environment, do investigate or survey about the information related to the materials, interpret the situation and giving a better solution.

Therefore, the process of analysis skills involves understanding the topic or the problem, identifying the topic or the problem, gathering information, finding reasons for a phenomenon, and suggesting good solutions. Through analysis skills, students are more active in giving their ideas and arguments.

C. Problem Solving skill

The informants viewed that problem solving skill is the key component in practising critical thinking skills among undergraduate students of ISED-IIUM. Students in the classrooms need to develop their problem-solving skills when they face academic and non-academic issues or problem. Based on the responses of respondents, problem solving skills have been identified as part of critical thinking skills which can be practised in the classroom. A number of research studies have provided evidence supporting the notion that the acquisition of problem-solving skills significantly impacts to the development of critical thinking abilities (Changwong et al., 2018).

The faculty members stated that the students who are able to think critically can solve problems effectively. It is not enough to simply have knowledge or information. The lecturers make an effort to provide their students with critical thinking learning activities like presentations, discussions, and debates. The students are trying to solve the problem with identify the issue, gather data, and learn new things as a result of those actions. In order to be successful in the learning process, students must also be able to solve problems, make effective decision and giving the best solution. They must also be able to think critically. This means the ability to solve the problem is also one of the important aspects of critical thinking skills that should be possessed by the students. In line with Alazzi, (2008) state that Problem-solving skills are the process of identifying a problem, searching for alternative solutions, and implementing the best solution in a new situation.

Students' problem-solving skills will also train their observation and exploration abilities. Students must be able to analyze a topic in depth in order to identify the solution to a problem. According to McDonald (2017), enhancing critical thinking skills through problem solving in teaching and learning effectively improved the students learning outcome and practising problem solving scenarios with a focus on critical thinking in a time-limited setting results in a measured improvement of this skill.

D. Reflection Skill

The following skill in developing critical thinking skills is reflection skill. According to the faculty members, reflection skill is a process that needs mental abilities that offer experience in problem solving, identify what is previously known, adjust understanding in order to solve difficulties, and apply the results achieved in new conditions. This ability can help students develop logical thoughts and arguments. According to Noer (2010) reflection skill is mentally involves cognitive processes to understand the factors that cause conflict in a situation.

In addition, reflection skill can help students and encourage them to use a structured model of reflection to demonstrate their ability, to reflect on their experiences during teaching and learning. So, by reflecting, students can develop critical thinking skills by linking the knowledge gained and their previous understanding of solving new problems. This is consistent with Aysun's (2011) definition of reflection skill, which is a process of guided and appropriate actions where people analyze, evaluate, motivate, grasp the deep meaning, and employ suitable learning techniques.

According to the informants, in order to help students practice reflection skills in the classroom, contextual problems were given to them at the beginning of the lesson.

This allowed students to practice reacting to a given problem by improving their ability to mention what they know, what is asked, and how the two given problems relate to each other. After that, discussion activities that involve showing the results of the work can help students get better at analyzing and clarifying their own experiences in order to judge actions that they believe in. This is because these activities help students learn how to explain effective ways to solve problems by making connections between the problem being asked and a problem they have already faced, as well as how they planned to solve it and what they found out. Furthermore, problem solving evaluation exercises help students identify the truth and error in solving a problem, fix mistakes, and draw the proper conclusions. These activities enhance students' capacity to inform and analyze the accuracy of answers.

Therefore, this skill helps students to develop critical thinking skills and improve future performance by analyzing what they have learned and how far they have come.

Synthesize Skill

Lastly, the informants viewed that the practice of synthesize skills also can help students to think critically. Through these skills, the students can practice critical thinking skills in the class. The students are trained to generate ideas by acquiring new concepts, creating information, and collecting data to select the best answers. This practice is in line with Winarto et al., (2012) the concept of synthesize skills is to choose, determine, and gather information, integrate, modify, reorganize, design, compiling, and generalizing evidence or opinions from a diverse list of sources to support the arguments or conclusions being built.

In addition, as stated in the literature, it is clearly seen that synthesizing skills help in cultivating critical thinking skills as students reach the level of applying, analyzing and evaluating. The focus of learning is to know 'how' rather than to know 'what'. Based on this activity, synthesis is considered an essential skill capable of supporting the systematization of thought in the creation of new knowledge. Therefore, synthesis can be symbolized as a red thread of the result of a set of information, evidence, and opinions that support an argument.

Conclusion

the analysis of critical thinking skills for Islamic Education students at the International Islamic University of Malaysia's International Campus reveals a nuanced and dynamic approach to nurturing intellectual acumen within a distinctly Islamic context. The infusion of critical thinking into the educational fabric is not merely an academic exercise but a deliberate endeavor to align the students' intellectual development with the principles of Islamic education. As the study unfolds, it becomes evident that critical thinking skills are not seen in isolation; rather, they are seamlessly integrated into the broader pedagogical framework, emphasizing the interconnectedness of faith-based knowledge and analytical thinking.

One notable outcome of this analysis is the evident impact on the students' ability to engage with Islamic teachings critically. The integration of critical thinking skills enables students to delve into the depths of religious texts, encouraging a thoughtful and reflective interpretation that transcends rote memorization. By fostering

an environment that values inquiry and analysis, the International Islamic University of Malaysia empowers its students to navigate the complexities of contemporary issues within the Islamic context, thereby contributing to the development of informed and discerning leaders. Moving forward, the university remains committed to refining and expanding its strategies for the cultivation of critical thinking skills, recognizing them as instrumental not only in academic pursuits but also in the holistic development of individuals prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader global discourse.

This chapter provided an analysis of Kulliyah of Education, IIUM faculty's members' perspectives on the practice of critical thinking skills among Islamic Education undergraduate students at Kulliyah of Education. From the findings, it can be concluded that through the attainment of higherorder thinking skills, problem solving skills, reflection skills and synthesis skills, undergraduate students specializing in Islamic Education are able to practice critical thinking skills. Someone who has critical thinking skills tend to be faster identify relevant information, separate out irrelevant information and use this information to look for solutions to problems or take decisions, and if necessary seek information relevant support.

In line with the results of the study that conducted by (Johnson, 2008), students who have critical thinking skills adequate has a high probability for can study the problem systematically, face myriads of challenges in ways organized, formulate questions innovative, and design solutions that are considered relatively new. Someone needs have critical thinking skills and need learn it, because of the skill very useful and as stock in face life now and in the future which will come.

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