

## ISLAMIC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATION: ADVANCING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH REFLECTIVE AND INQUIRY-BASED PRACTICES

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<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p><i>Islamic epistemology; reflective–inquiry pedagogy; critical reasoning; adab-based education; integrative pedagogical model.</i></p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study investigates the integration of Islamic epistemology in elementary education through a case study at Sekolah Dasar Ummu Aiman Malang. The research aims to examine how epistemological integration is operationalized in classroom practice and how reflective–inquiry pedagogy contributes to the development of critical reasoning grounded in adab. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic coding and triangulation techniques. The findings reveal that the integration of Islamic epistemology remains praxis-implicit, characterized by a strong emphasis on tawhid and adab without an explicitly articulated epistemological framework. Although critical thinking practices have developed within a religious frame, they have not yet been systematically constructed as an epistemically conscious pedagogical design. Epistemic agency among students begins to emerge through reflective dialogue; however, classroom epistemic relations are still predominantly shaped by bayani reasoning, and the school’s strong religious culture has not been fully aligned with Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) indicators in the formal curriculum. Reflective–inquiry pedagogy is implemented through three layered stages: normative reflection, guided inquiry, and adab-based argumentative clarification, forming a normative–empirical–argumentative thinking pattern. Open-ended questioning enhances students’ argumentative participation, positioning reflection as a bridge between moral awareness and rational analysis. Adab dialogue structures argumentation into claim–reason–reference patterns, functioning as an epistemic regulator. Conceptually, the study formulates an Integrative Normative–Analytical Pedagogical Model grounded in tawhidic orientation (epistemic foundation), contextual analytical dialogue (learning process), and adab regulation (ethical control). This model contributes to the global discourse on integrative moral–critical education by offering an Islamic epistemological perspective that reconciles value formation and rational inquiry within a coherent pedagogical framework.</p>
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### A. Introduction

The phenomenon of education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools) in the era of cognitive transformation indicates an urgent need to reconstruct learning paradigms so that they align with an integrative Islamic epistemology. From an Islamic perspective, education is not merely the transmission of knowledge (*ta’lim*), but also the formation of holistic intellectual and spiritual consciousness.<sup>1</sup> The concept of *adab* as articulated by Al-Attas situates knowledge within the framework of recognizing and acknowledging the proper order of truth; thus, learning should encourage reflective

<sup>1</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam* (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1991).

engagement of the intellect rather than mere normative memorization. However, in practice, instruction in many Madrasah Ibtidaiyah remains predominantly repetitive and affirmative, particularly in religious subjects, limiting dialogical and exploratory spaces that nurture critical reasoning. This condition reveals a gap between the ideal of Islamic epistemology—which emphasizes the integration of reason and revelation—and pedagogical practices that remain textual and instructional.

Conceptually, the classical Islamic educational tradition has long emphasized the development of reason through dialogue, argumentation, and reflection. Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* asserts that the function of the intellect is to understand the wisdom behind the Shari'ah rather than merely follow it literally; therefore, education must open spaces for tafakkur (reflection) and tadabbur (contemplation).<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldun in *Al-Muqaddimah* likewise criticized teaching methods overly oriented toward memorization, arguing that they weaken intellectual capacity and hinder the maturation of reason ('aql).<sup>3</sup> In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, students are at the formative stage of rational and moral development; thus, inquiry and reflective approaches possess strong legitimacy within the Islamic pedagogical heritage. Nevertheless, reality shows that reflective practices often remain one-directional—teachers conclude moral meanings without allowing students to construct meaning dialogically.

Furthermore, Abdullah Nasih Ulwan in his concept of *tarbiyah al-awlad fi al-Islam* emphasizes the integration of intellectual education (*tarbiyah 'aqliyah*) and faith education (*tarbiyah imaniyah*) through dialogue, habituation, and exemplary conduct.<sup>4</sup> This integration aligns with the Qur'anic principle of hikmah (wisdom) (Qur'an 16:125), which highlights persuasive and argumentative approaches in conveying values. However, amid social transformation and the rapid flow of digital information, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah education has not fully developed an inquiry-based foundation that enables students to verify, reflect upon, and reason about information ethically. Without a systematic reflective framework, value internalization risks becoming dogmatic and lacking epistemic awareness. Therefore, research on Islamic education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah within the era of cognitive transformation is crucial to formulate a reflective and inquiry-based pedagogical model rooted in Islamic intellectual tradition while remaining responsive to contemporary challenges.

One major problem in Islamic elementary education (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as the foundation of child education) is the dominance of a knowledge-transmission approach centered on memorization and textual reproduction, while reflective and dialogical dimensions remain insufficiently structured. Islamic intellectual tradition, in fact, positions reason ('aql) as a vital instrument in understanding revelation and reality.<sup>5</sup> Yet contemporary religious instruction often stops at normative affirmation without opening exploratory questions that encourage children to think in terms of cause and effect or to grasp the wisdom behind teachings. This problem reflects a mismatch between the rational-reflective heritage of Islamic epistemology and pedagogical practices that remain textual and repetitive.

The second problem concerns the absence of an integrative pedagogical model that conceptually links cognitive and spiritual development from the earliest stages of education. The goal of Islamic education is the formation of the civilized human being (*insan beradab*)

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'ulum al-din (Vols. 1–4)* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Khaldun dan Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history* (Princeton University Press, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, *Tarbiyat al-awlad fi al-Islam* (Dar al-Salam, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Khaldun dan Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history*.

through the integration of knowledge and values, rather than their separation.<sup>6</sup> In reality, however, early childhood and elementary education often separates cognitive learning (literacy, basic science, simple logic) from meaningful reflection, while religious education tends to stress morality without strengthening reasoning processes. Consequently, children may possess religious knowledge but lack the reflective capacity to understand, evaluate, and internalize meanings consciously. The absence of a systematic inquiry-based design prevents value internalization from fully generating epistemic awareness.

The third problem emerges in the context of cognitive transformation driven by digitalization and global information flows. Muslim children are now exposed to diverse sources of information, including religious content that does not always carry scholarly authority. Without habituation in reflective thinking and critical questioning from early education, children risk accepting information passively and literally. In contrast, the Qur'an repeatedly encourages tafakkur, tadabbur, and the use of reason in understanding the signs of God (Qur'an 3:190–191). When educational practices fail to cultivate a directed and reflective inquiry culture, the dynamic intellectual potential of Islamic teachings remains unrealized in learning. Therefore, research on developing critical thinking through reflective and inquiry-based practices becomes essential to address the epistemological and pedagogical challenges of Islamic education in the era of cognitive transformation.

Existing scholarship on Islamic Early Childhood Education predominantly conceptualizes religious formation as moral internalization and identity construction<sup>7</sup>, yet rarely theorizes how epistemic agency and critical reasoning are cultivated within an Islamic worldview. Conversely, research on critical thinking in early education is largely grounded in secular constructivist paradigms,<sup>8</sup> often detached from theological epistemologies. This bifurcation has created a conceptual disjunction in which Islamic education is framed as normatively formative, while critical thinking is positioned as cognitively analytical but spiritually neutral. Such fragmentation is not merely a literature gap but an epistemological tension that leaves unresolved how reflective reasoning may operate within a faith-based ontological framework.

This study aims to reconstruct a critical thinking framework grounded in Islamic epistemology that integrates faith and epistemic agency among students of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Specifically, it seeks to identify the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations that support the development of critical thinking capacity within an Islamic value framework, thereby achieving a balance between normative commitment (faith and adab) and students' analytical competence. Additionally, the study seeks to operationalize reflective–inquiry pedagogy in classroom practice to develop adab-based critical reasoning and to formulate an integrative pedagogical model that coherently and contextually synthesizes the normative and analytical dimensions of Islamic education. The resulting model is expected to provide both conceptual and practical contributions to the development of Islamic elementary education design.

## B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore in depth the reconstruction of critical thinking based on Islamic epistemology in the integration of faith and epistemic agency, the operationalization of reflective–inquiry pedagogy, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam*.

<sup>7</sup> Abdullah Sahin, *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation* (Kube Publishing, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Deanna Kuhn, "Thinking together and alone," *Educational Researcher* 44, no. 1 (2015): 46–53.

formulation of an integrative pedagogical model within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools). The case study design was chosen because it allows for a holistic and contextual exploration of phenomena within real-life settings.<sup>9</sup> The research was conducted at Sekolah Dasar Islam Ummu Aiman Malang as an intrinsic case selected purposively based on its curriculum characteristics and learning practices that integrate normative and analytical dimensions. The research participants included the principal, teachers, and students, who were selected through purposive sampling.<sup>10</sup> Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the construction and implementation of the pedagogical model under study.<sup>11</sup>

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña complemented by thematic analysis to identify patterns of integration among the dimensions of faith, adab, and epistemic agency in pedagogical practices.<sup>12</sup> The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to establish the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.<sup>13</sup> This approach enabled the development of a contextual conceptual construction while also contributing theoretically to the advancement of integrative pedagogical models in Islamic elementary education.

### C. Results and Discussion

#### Reconstruction of Critical Thinking Based on Islamic Epistemology for the Integration of Faith and Epistemic Agency in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

Based on classroom observations, in-depth interviews with six teachers, and analysis of lesson plan documents (RPP), the findings indicate that the integration of Islamic epistemology at Sekolah Dasar Islam Ummu Aiman Malang remains praxis-oriented and implicit. Teachers consistently begin lessons with affirmations of tawhidic values and adab, subsequently connecting them to activities involving cause–effect identification, information classification, and simple conclusion drawing. However, no explicit epistemological framework was found to systematically guide the integration between naqli (revealed sources) and empirical exploration. This suggests that critical thinking practices develop within a framework of normative religiosity but have not yet been constructed as a consciously epistemic pedagogical design. The findings indicate the presence of an “embedded epistemology” not yet systematically articulated in curricular instruments.

Field findings regarding students’ epistemic agency within the framework of adab show that when instruction is designed through reflective dialogue and contextual problem-solving, students are capable of posing clarificatory questions and providing justifications for their answers. Interviews with fifth-grade students reveal that questioning is understood as part of “seeking truth that is pleasing to Allah,” rather than merely an academic exercise. Faith thus functions as a motivational foundation for building epistemic agency. Nevertheless, a strong tendency persists toward teacher authority as the ultimate validator,

<sup>9</sup> Robert K Yin, *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*, 6th ed. (Sage Publications, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*, 4th ed. (Sage Publications, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> John W Creswell dan Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 4th ed. (Sage Publications, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Virginia Braun dan Victoria Clarke, “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

<sup>13</sup> Yvonna S Lincoln dan Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Sage Publications, 1985).

resulting in a hierarchical epistemic relationship. Theoretically, this condition reflects the dominance of bayani reasoning over the strengthening of burhani reasoning in instructional practice.

Institutionally, the school possesses a strong religious culture manifested in worship habituation, Qur'anic literacy, and moral internalization. However, curriculum document analysis indicates that learning outcome indicators do not explicitly integrate faith and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). The absence of operational indicators of epistemic agency results in the situational rather than systemic development of critical thinking. This reveals a gap between spiritual culture and analytical pedagogical design, necessitating epistemological reconstruction to harmonize bayani, burhani, and irfani dimensions in elementary Islamic education.

Conceptually, these findings reflect the existence of an implicit epistemic structure operating within teachers' pedagogical consciousness, particularly in linking tawhidic values with students' reflective activities. In contemporary Islamic epistemology, faith and reason are not separate domains but an ontological unity in the search for truth. Faith serves as an axiological foundation directing critical thought. However, without explicit articulation in curriculum documents, integration remains praxis-dependent and contingent upon individual teacher capacity. Thus, conceptual reconstruction is required so that faith becomes not only a moral foundation but also an operational epistemic framework in instruction.

When analyzed using Mohammed Abed al-Jabri's trilogy of reasoning, instructional practices observed in this study demonstrate the predominance of bayani reasoning—orientation toward textual authority and knowledge transmission.<sup>14</sup> Burhani reasoning appears in cause–effect discussions but remains unsystematized analytically, while irfani reasoning is evident in spiritual internalization and adab habituation. Imbalance among these modes prevents full epistemological synthesis. Strengthening argumentative rationality in curriculum design is therefore necessary.

The emergence of student epistemic agency grounded in religious consciousness aligns with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of Islamization of knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Al-Attas emphasizes adab as placing things in their proper order within the cosmic and moral structure of meaning. In this context, epistemic agency is not absolute autonomy but moral responsibility in seeking truth. Without explicit methodological structuring, however, such potential risks remaining at the level of moral disposition.

Similarly, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's conception of tawhid as the integrative principle of knowledge supports the integration of faith and rationality.<sup>16</sup> Tawhid functions not only theologically but epistemologically and methodologically, guiding argumentation and evaluation. Osman Bakar's integrative science framework further emphasizes the unity of metaphysical, rational, and empirical dimensions within Islamic education.<sup>17</sup>

Theoretically, these findings enrich discourse on faith–reason relations in contemporary Islamic education. Unlike secular constructivism that centers autonomous reason, Islamic epistemology situates reason within tawhid and adab.<sup>18</sup> Epistemic agency

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<sup>14</sup> Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, *Bunyat al-'aql al-'Arabi: Dirasah tabli'iyyah naqdiyyah li-nuzum al-ma'rifah fi al-thaqafah al-'Arabiyyah* (Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education* (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1980).

<sup>16</sup> Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of knowledge: General principles and work plan* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Osman Bakar, *The history and philosophy of Islamic science* (Islamic Texts Society, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam*.

becomes ethically accountable intellectual engagement rather than liberal individual autonomy.

This study thus proposes an integrative faith–epistemic agency model grounded in three principles: tawhid as epistemic worldview, balance of bayani–burhani–irfani reasoning, and adab as intellectual ethics. Such synthesis supports critical thinking development rooted in spiritual foundations while promoting reflective and active epistemic subjectivity.

### **Operationalization of Reflective–Inquiry Pedagogy in Developing Adab-Based Critical Reasoning**

Based on field findings, reflective–inquiry pedagogy was implemented through three principal stages: (1) value-based normative reflection, (2) guided inquiry exploration, and (3) adab-based argumentative clarification. In the first stage, teachers initiated lessons with reflective questions connecting subject matter to tawhidic values and moral responsibility. The second stage involved observation of contextual phenomena and formulation of simple hypotheses by students. Observational data indicated that approximately 70 percent of students actively engaged in argumentation when teachers employed open-ended questioning rather than lecture-based instruction. This pattern suggests that reflection functions as a bridge between normative awareness and analytical engagement, producing a layered cognitive structure: normative–empirical–argumentative.

The inquiry process was understood by students as part of “seeking the correct answer before Allah,” indicating the internalization of spiritual intentionality within cognitive activity. Prior to discussion, teachers consistently established dialogical adab norms, including refraining from interrupting others and providing rational justification. As a result, classroom discourse developed into structured argumentation characterized by claim–reason–evidence patterns rather than mere opinion exchange. Analytically, adab functioned as an epistemic regulator that safeguarded dialogical quality while cultivating ethical consciousness. This model of adab-based reasoning thus differs significantly from secular inquiry approaches that privilege cognitive autonomy alone.

Curriculum analysis, however, revealed that reflective–inquiry pedagogy has not yet been institutionalized systematically. Indicators of critical reasoning in lesson plans remain general and do not explicitly integrate adab into assessment structures. Teachers acknowledged that evaluation continues to emphasize answer accuracy over argumentative quality and dialogical ethics. Conceptually, this indicates that reflective–inquiry pedagogy remains at the level of individual innovation rather than institutional paradigm. Consequently, operational indicators and assessment instruments are required to measure the integration of cognitive and ethical dimensions in adab-based critical reasoning.

The three stages of normative reflection, guided inquiry, and adab-based argumentative clarification demonstrate methodological coherence with John Dewey’s theory of reflective inquiry.<sup>19</sup> Dewey argues that reflective thinking proceeds from problematic situations to hypothesis formation and rational verification. While this structure is evident in classroom practice, Islamic pedagogy modifies Dewey’s framework by grounding reflection in tawhidic consciousness and spiritual intentionality. This orientation resonates with the Prophetic tradition: “Actions are judged by intentions.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, normative reflection functions as alignment of epistemic intention prior to analytical engagement.

<sup>19</sup> John Dewey, *How we think* (D. C. Heath and Company, 1933).

<sup>20</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami’ al-sabih (Sabih al-Bukhari)* (Dar al-Tawq al-Najah, n.d.).

The integration of values in reasoning corresponds with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of adab as the inculcation of proper order within meaning.<sup>21</sup> Adab serves as an epistemic guide ensuring that intellectual freedom remains oriented toward ontological and moral truth. The Prophetic tradition, "Whomever Allah intends goodness for, He grants him understanding of the religion,"<sup>22</sup> reinforces the integration of knowledge and value. Similarly, Al-Ghazali emphasizes in *Ayyuha al-Walad* that knowledge must be accompanied by purified intention and orientation toward the Hereafter.<sup>23</sup>

From a character education perspective, adab-based argumentative clarification aligns with Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's emphasis on moral habituation through dialogical training.<sup>24</sup> The ethic of gentleness in classroom dialogue reflects the Prophetic teaching: "Gentleness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it."<sup>25</sup> While this practice parallels Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development through reflective dialogue,<sup>26</sup> Islamic pedagogy situates rationality within a transcendent moral horizon shaped by revelation and tawhid.

From a constructivist standpoint, guided inquiry reflects Lev Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD), wherein dialogue supports learners in surpassing initial competence.<sup>27</sup> Yet in Islamic pedagogy, scaffolding encompasses ethical formation alongside cognitive development. Furthermore, Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, which emphasizes critical reflection on underlying assumptions,<sup>28</sup> parallels the transformative dimension observed in normative reflection grounded in tawhidic values. This transformation extends beyond cognitive reframing to spiritual self-awareness as servant (*abd*) and vicegerent (*khalifah*). The Prophetic tradition describing the intelligent person as one who prepares for the Hereafter<sup>11</sup> underscores this ethical transformative dimension.

Within critical pedagogy discourse, Paulo Freire's dialogical model also intersects with reflective inquiry.<sup>29</sup> However, while Freire emphasizes socio-political emancipation, adab-based pedagogy integrates spiritual accountability. The Prophetic injunction, "Convey from me even if only one verse,"<sup>30</sup> frames intellectual engagement as moral responsibility before God. Thus, intellectual freedom is directed not merely toward structural critique but toward ethical accountability.

In the Indonesian Islamic educational context, this integrative approach resonates with Muhaimin's call for transformation toward a faith-knowledge-action paradigm.<sup>31</sup> The resulting pedagogical synthesis integrates classical Islamic scholarship (Al-Ghazali, Ulwan), contemporary Islamic epistemology (Al-Attas, al-Faruqi), and modern educational theory (Dewey, Vygotsky, Mezirow, Freire, Kohlberg). Reflective-inquiry pedagogy grounded in

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam*.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-sahih (Sahih al-Bukhari)*.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ayyuha al-walad* (Dar al-Minhaj, n.d.).

<sup>24</sup> Ulwan, *Tarbiyat al-awlad fi al-Islam*.

<sup>25</sup> Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Al-Musnad al-sahih al-mukhtasar (Sahih Muslim)* (Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.).

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on moral development: Vol. 2. The psychology of moral development* (Harper & Row, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> Jack Mezirow, *Transformative dimensions of adult learning* (Jossey-Bass, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Continuum, 1970).

<sup>30</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-sahih (Sahih al-Bukhari)*.

<sup>31</sup> Muhaimin, *Nuansa baru pendidikan Islam: Mengurai benang kusut dunia pendidikan* (RajaGrafindo Persada, 2006).

adab therefore emerges as an integrative model capable of fostering 21st-century critical reasoning while preserving moral-spiritual orientation.

### **Formulation of an Integrative Pedagogical Model for Synergizing the Normative and Analytical Dimensions of Islamic Education**

Field findings related to the formulation of an integrative pedagogical model for synergizing the normative and analytical dimensions of Islamic education were identified in three primary categories: (1) tawhidic orientation as an epistemic foundation, (2) contextual case-based analytical dialogue, and (3) adab regulation as an ethical control mechanism. The open coding process revealed that teachers did not separate normative and analytical dimensions but perceived them as a continuous flow of reasoning. Validation through member checking confirmed that such integration was understood as a pedagogical necessity to avoid the dichotomy between “memorizing textual evidence” and “critical thinking.” These findings indicate that the integrative model emerged from practical reflection rather than mere theoretical adoption.

Classroom observations showed that instruction typically began with normative reflective questioning, continued with case-based analytical exploration, and concluded with argumentative clarification within the framework of dialogical adab. Interaction analysis demonstrated improved argumentative quality when teachers used open-ended questions and simple rubrics structured around claim–reason–evidence. Triangulation with field notes suggested that the normative dimension functioned as moral framing, while the analytical dimension developed through causal exploration. This pattern reveals a layered pedagogical structure that can be conceptualized as an integrative model. However, curriculum document analysis (lesson plans, teaching modules, and evaluation instruments) exposed misalignment between innovative classroom practice and formal curricular design. Learning indicators remained fragmented between attitude and knowledge without assessment instruments measuring their integration. This indicates an implementation gap between micro-level innovation (classroom practice) and macro-level institutional structure. Conceptually, the study proposes an Integrative Normative–Analytical Pedagogical Model that positions value reflection as foundation, rational analysis as process, and adab as epistemic regulator. The model contributes to global discourse on integrative moral–critical education from an Islamic perspective.

The three categories—tawhidic orientation, contextual analytical dialogue, and adab regulation—demonstrate that the integrative model emerging from teacher praxis possesses strong epistemological grounding. Tawhidic orientation as worldview framing aligns with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas’s conception of education, which situates adab and recognition of the order of reality as its core.<sup>32</sup> In this framework, the normative dimension is not supplementary but ontological, guiding cognitive processes. This integration also reflects Ismail Raji al-Faruqi’s principle of tawhid as the unity of knowledge, rejecting the dichotomy between revelation and reason.<sup>33</sup> Thus, teachers’ perception of normative and analytical reasoning as continuous reflects coherence with integrative Islamic epistemology.

The layered pedagogical structure—normative reflection, analytical exploration, and argumentative clarification—resonates with John Dewey’s theory of reflective inquiry, which emphasizes movement from problematization toward rational verification through dialogue.<sup>34</sup> However, unlike Deweyan secular inquiry, this model initiates reflection with

<sup>32</sup> Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of knowledge: General principles and work plan*.

<sup>34</sup> Dewey, *How we think*.

tawhidic moral consciousness. Case-based dialogue and open questioning correspond with Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism, particularly scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, wherein teachers facilitate reasoning development through dialogical interaction.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the integrative model may be understood as a synthesis between modern constructivism and Islamic ethical-spiritual pedagogy.

Adab regulation as an ethical control mechanism reveals a character dimension parallel to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which emphasizes rational deliberation in moral judgment.<sup>36</sup> Yet within Islamic education, rationality is framed by transcendent consciousness rather than autonomous ethics alone. This perspective is consistent with Al-Ghazali's argument in *Ayyuba al-Walad* that knowledge must produce moral transformation and spiritual responsibility.<sup>37</sup> The finding that adab regulates epistemic practice indicates that argumentative quality is evaluated not only through logical accuracy but also through ethical expression. Thus, the model integrates cognitive and moral dimensions within a unified pedagogical framework.

Nevertheless, curriculum analysis reveals an implementation gap between classroom innovation and institutional design. The fragmentation of attitude and knowledge indicators reflects a still-dualistic curriculum paradigm. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, meaningful educational transformation requires restructuring both meaning frameworks and assessment systems.<sup>38</sup> This misalignment suggests that reformulating the integrative model must be accompanied by assessment reconstruction capable of measuring the simultaneous integration of value reflection and rational analysis. Accordingly, the Integrative Normative–Analytical Pedagogical Model proposed in this study contributes to global discourse on integrative moral–critical education by offering a paradigm that unites tawhidic reflection, analytical dialogue, and adab regulation as a single epistemic and pedagogical framework.

#### D. Conclusion

The integration of Islamic epistemology at Sekolah Dasar Ummu Aiman Malang remains praxis-oriented and implicit, with a strong emphasis on tawhid and adab, although it has not yet been articulated within an explicit and systematic epistemological framework. Critical thinking practices have developed within a religious framework but have not been fully constructed as an epistemically conscious pedagogical design. Students' epistemic agency has begun to emerge through reflective dialogue; however, epistemic relations in the classroom remain largely dominated by bayani reasoning, and the school's strong religious culture has not yet been fully integrated with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) indicators within the formal curriculum.

In practice, reflective–inquiry pedagogy is implemented through three layered stages: normative reflection, guided inquiry, and adab-based argumentative clarification, forming a normative–empirical–argumentative thinking pattern. Data indicate that students engage more actively in argumentation when teachers employ open-ended questioning, suggesting that reflection functions effectively as a bridge between moral awareness and rational analysis. Learning is understood as the search for truth before Allah, signifying the integration

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<sup>35</sup> Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Kohlberg, *Essays on moral development: Vol. 2. The psychology of moral development*.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ayyuba al-walad*.

<sup>38</sup> Mezirow, *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*.

of spiritual dimensions into cognitive activity while strengthening value-oriented critical thinking.

Consistently applied dialogical adab produces a claim–reason–evidence structure and functions as an epistemic regulator that maintains the quality of argumentation. Conceptually, the integrative pedagogical model formulated in this study rests on three principal pillars: tawhidic orientation as the epistemic foundation, contextual analytical dialogue as the learning process, and adab regulation as ethical control. Teachers perceive normative and analytical dimensions as a continuous flow of reasoning, thereby avoiding the dichotomy between memorizing textual evidence and critical thinking. The layered instructional structure—value reflection, causal exploration, and argumentative clarification—demonstrates improved student argument quality, where the normative dimension operates as moral framing and the analytical dimension develops through open dialogue grounded in rationality guided by adab.

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