Volume 1, No. 1, November 2025
E-ISSN:

alizzah
Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah
https://ejournal.iaikhozin.ac.id/ojs/index.php/Al-Izzah

INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS IN ISLAMIC EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM DESIGN

Sodikin[1]*, Miftakhul Munir[2]
[1]Darullughah Wadda'wah International Islamic University
[2]PGRI Wiranegara University (UNIWARA), Pasuruan

*E-mail: sodikin@uiidalwa.ac.id

Keywords:

Spiritual intelligence, Higher-Order Thinking Skills, Reflective learning, Curriculum integration

Abstract

This study investigates the integration of spiritual intelligence and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) curriculum and its impact on student learning paradigms. The findings indicate a significant shift from rote memorization to reflective-analytical learning, where cognitive and spiritual dimensions are intertwined. Learning practices emphasize exploration, analytical discussion, value-based reflection, and solution formulation rooted in moral responsibility, positioning HOTS as a medium for internalizing Islamic values. Authentic assessment partially measures both cognitive accuracy and moral-spiritual reflection, although standardization remains limited. Implementation challenges include uneven application across classes, teacher readiness, and integration across subjects. Overall, the integrative model enhances reflective spirituality and critical thinking, highlighting its academic relevance and strategic role in developing intellectually and spiritually mature students. The study underscores the need for institutional support, teacher capacity building, and curriculum coordination to sustain reflective learning ecosystems.

A. Introduction

The development of critical thinking skills has become a global concern in the discourse of 21st-century education. Various international reports emphasize that education is no longer sufficient if it is oriented merely toward content mastery, but must foster higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), including analysis, evaluation, and reflection.[1] However, in practice, early childhood education in many contexts is still dominated by instructional approaches that are teacher-centered and oriented toward memorization.[2] In the context of Islamic education, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), learning often places greater emphasis on the transmission of values and doctrines rather than on dialogue, exploration, and children's reflective reasoning. This phenomenon indicates a gap between global demands for the development of critical thinking and pedagogical practices that remain normative and textual.

Theoretically, early childhood cognitive development has a strong foundation in Piaget's constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural approach, both of which emphasize the importance of interaction, open-ended questioning, and scaffolding in building higher-order thinking abilities.[3] Recent studies show that critical thinking skills can be stimulated from the preschool years through reflective dialogue, inquiry-based learning, and problem-based

[1] UNESCO, "Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?" (UNESCO Publishing, 2015).
[2] Barbara Rogoff, *The cultural nature of human development* (Oxford University Press, 2003).
[3] Jean Piaget, *The psychology of the child* (Basic Books, 1972).

interaction.[4] However, in Islamic education, this cognitive dimension is often not systematically integrated with the spiritual dimension, even though Islam epistemologically recognizes the importance of reason ('aql), reflection (tafakkur), and contemplation (tadabbur) as part of the learning process.[5] This condition highlights the need for a conceptual reconstruction that integrates cognitive development with spiritual awareness within a coherent pedagogical framework.

Furthermore, studies on contemporary Islamic education identify an urgent need to develop transformative pedagogical models that not only cultivate ritual piety but also children's intellectual and moral capacities holistically.[6] The challenges of the digital disruption era also require children from an early age to possess the ability to filter information, think reflectively, and construct ethical reasoning.[7] Without integration between cognitive and spiritual dimensions, Islamic education risks becoming trapped in a dichotomy between religiosity and rationality. Therefore, this phenomenon reinforces the urgency of developing an integrative cognitive–spiritual framework in Islamic Early Childhood Education to reconstruct learning approaches that align with children's psychological development while remaining grounded in Islamic epistemological principles.

Although global discourse emphasizes the urgency of developing critical thinking in primary education, its implementation in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) still faces significant pedagogical challenges. International reports indicate that higher-order thinking skills constitute essential competencies of the 21st century that must be developed from the primary education level.[8] However, learning practices in many primary schools, including MI, remain dominated by memorization-oriented approaches, one-way content delivery, and evaluation based on knowledge reproduction.[9] In the context of Islamic education, religious instruction often emphasizes normative–doctrinal aspects rather than the development of reflective and dialogical reasoning. This condition potentially limits the growth of students' analytical, argumentative, and critical evaluative abilities during the concrete operational developmental stage.

Another issue concerns the lack of systematic integration between cognitive and spiritual dimensions within the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) curriculum. Epistemologically, Islam positions reason ('aql) and reflection (tafakkur) as essential instruments for understanding revelation and social reality.[10] However, in practice, Islamic Religious Education in MI is often positioned as the transmission of moral values and religious rituals that are separated from analytical activities and problem solving. In fact, at the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, students begin to understand cause–effect relationships, make classifications, and construct simple arguments.[11] This lack of integration creates a dichotomy between religiosity and rationality, leading students to internalize teachings normatively without adequate critical reflection.[12]

---

[4] Robert Fisher, *Teaching thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*, 4 ed. (Bloomsbury, 2013).

[5] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education* (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1991).

[6] Abdullah Sahin, *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation* (Kube Publishing, 2013).

[7] OECD, "OECD future of education and skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030" (OECD Publishing, 2019).

[8] UNESCO, "Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?"

[9] Fisher, *Teaching thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*.

[10] Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*, 1991.

[11] Piaget, *The psychology of the child*.

[12] Sahin, *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation*.

In addition, challenges related to teacher professionalism and instructional design constitute crucial factors in the development of critical thinking in MI. Studies indicate that primary education teachers frequently face limitations in designing inquiry-based learning strategies, reflective dialogue, and authentic assessment that foster higher-order thinking skills.[13] In the MI context, some educators still perceive critical thinking as an activity that may disrupt students' compliance with textual and teacher authority rather than as part of the rational and argumentative intellectual tradition of Islam.[14] This perception reflects epistemological and pedagogical problems that call for a reconstruction of an integrative cognitive–spiritual framework so that the development of critical thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can proceed harmoniously and contextually.

Previous studies indicate that the development of critical thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) generally remains focused on the application of specific pedagogical models without a systematic conceptual integration between cognitive and spiritual dimensions. Arifuddin's study found that MI students' critical thinking skills in mathematics learning were still categorized as low despite the implementation of certain instructional interventions.[15] Other research demonstrates that the application of project-based learning significantly improves students' critical thinking compared to conventional methods, while problem-solving learning approaches have also been proven effective in enhancing MI students' analytical skills. In addition, self-regulated learning models have been reported to positively influence the development of students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, constructivist learning processes are considered capable of encouraging students' interpretive, analytical, and evaluative abilities, and the integration of inquiry-based Islamic critical thinking in pesantren environments shows increased learners' intellectual engagement. Nevertheless, these studies remain partial and have not formulated an integrative cognitive–spiritual framework that explicitly combines modern cognitive development theory with Islamic epistemology in the MI context, thereby opening conceptual space for this study to propose a more comprehensive integrative model.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the design, implementation, and evaluation processes of a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)–based Islamic education model aimed at enhancing university students' religious literacy. A case study design was selected because it enables contextual and comprehensive exploration of phenomena within real-life learning settings.[16] The research site was determined purposively within Islamic Education programs or institutions that had integrated AI technologies into instructional practices. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling, involving course lecturers, students participating in RAG-based learning, and digital learning system administrators, as recommended in qualitative research to achieve depth of data.[17] Data were collected through

[13] Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in education*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[14] Sahin, *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation*.

[15] Arifuddin, "The development of critical thinking skills in mathematics learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam* 6, no. 2 (2019): 145–60.

[16] Robert K. Yin, "Robert K. Yin Case Study Research Design and Methods, Third Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol 5 2002.pdf," 2003.

[17] John W Creswell dan Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 4th ed. (Sage Publications, 2018).

semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to capture the dynamics of model implementation and participants' experiences holistically.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, encompassing stages of data condensation, data display, coding, theme identification, and reflective conclusion drawing.[18] Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data without eliminating its substantive meaning. Trustworthiness was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to establish credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.[19] The results of the analysis were subsequently used to formulate a contextual and adaptive conceptual model for RAG-based Islamic education development aligned with Islamic epistemological values in the era of digital transformation.

C. Results and Conclussion

Model of Integrating Spiritual Intelligence and HOTS in MI Curriculum Design

The analysis of curriculum documents, lesson plans, and teaching modules indicates a shift in learning orientation in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah from a purely cognitive focus toward the integration of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and spiritual dimensions. Learning outcomes are no longer formulated solely at the level of conceptual analysis but are expanded to include indicators of Islamic value reflection. For example, in science learning, objectives that originally emphasized the ability to analyze the process of rainfall are developed into the ability to analyze the phenomenon while simultaneously reflecting on the order of nature as a manifestation of Allah's greatness. This finding suggests that analytical activities are directed toward deepening awareness of meaning and the values of tawhid, allowing cognitive and spiritual dimensions to become intertwined within formal curriculum design.

This integration is further confirmed in pedagogical practices in the classroom. Observations reveal a systematic learning pattern that begins with the exploration of contextual phenomena, followed by analytical discussion, value reflection through open-ended questions, and concludes with the formulation of solutions grounded in moral responsibility. In social studies lessons on environmental cleanliness, for instance, students not only analyze the impact of waste on health but also evaluate community behavior based on Islamic teachings and design concrete actions as expressions of ethical responsibility. Interviews with teachers and students indicate that reflective questioning is consistently used to guide value-based evaluation. Thus, HOTS functions as a medium for value internalization, where processes of analysis and evaluation become instruments for developing reflective spiritual awareness.

This integration is also beginning to appear in assessment practices. Some teachers have developed assessment rubrics that evaluate not only the accuracy of answers but also the quality of arguments, the relevance of Islamic values, and the depth of students' reflections. In project-based tasks, students are assessed on their ability to explain the moral and spiritual foundations underlying the solutions they propose. However, the implementation of authentic assessment has not yet been fully standardized; most evaluations still predominantly measure cognitive achievement rather than systematically assessing value reflection. Overall, these findings indicate that the integration of spiritual intelligence and HOTS has progressed from conceptual discourse to relatively structured operational practice, yet it still requires institutional strengthening to ensure that alignment

[18] M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, dan J. Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook (3rd ed.)* (California: Sage Publications, 2014).

[19] Yvonna S Lincoln dan Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Sage Publications, 1985).

among objectives, processes, and assessment can be implemented consistently and sustainably.

The shift in the curriculum orientation of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) from a cognitive approach toward the integration of HOTS and the spiritual dimension indicates a paradigmatic transformation in Islamic educational practice. This transformation is not merely methodological but also epistemological, as it seeks to overcome the dichotomy between reason and revelation. In the perspective of Islamic education, knowledge ('ilm) is not understood as a neutral entity but as a means of drawing closer to Allah and cultivating adab. Therefore, the integration of HOTS and spiritual intelligence represents an effort to reconstruct the curriculum so that it aligns with the Islamic worldview. As stated in a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: *"Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise"* (Sahih Muslim). This hadith affirms that intellectual activity carries a transcendental orientation, thereby providing normative legitimacy for the integration of HOTS and spiritual intelligence within the Islamic tradition.

The HOTS framework itself refers to the revision of Bloom's Taxonomy developed by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl in *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing* (2001), which emphasizes the abilities of analysis, evaluation, and creation. In the research findings, these three levels are positioned as instruments for value reflection. For example, analyzing natural phenomena does not stop at scientific cause–effect relationships but is directed toward reading the *ayat kauniyah* as signs of Allah's greatness. In this way, HOTS undergoes an expansion of meaning from merely a cognitive skill to a means of internalizing tawhid. This perspective is consistent with the Qur'anic call to think and reflect (*tafakkur*) on His creation (Qur'an, Ali Imran 3:190–191), where analytical processes become part of tawhid-oriented awareness.

This integration is consistent with Danah Zohar's theory of spiritual intelligence, which emphasizes the human capacity to construct meaning, values, and existential orientation.[20] In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), such meaning is not abstract but grounded in the principles of *tawhid* and *adab*. Reflecting on the phenomenon of rainfall as a manifestation of the order of Allah's creation illustrates how empirical knowledge is integrated with transcendental awareness. This finding strengthens the argument that the integration of HOTS and spirituality is not merely a pedagogical synthesis but an ontological synthesis between fact and meaning.

From a pedagogical perspective, the reflective inquiry practices identified in this study can be interpreted through John Dewey's concept of reflective thinking, which positions reflection as an active and disciplined process of examining beliefs and knowledge claims.[21] However, within the MI context, reflection is expanded to include the dimension of faith. Reflection does not only test rational validity but also evaluates alignment with Islamic values. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stated: *"The intelligent person is the one who controls himself and works for what comes after death."* This hadith suggests that true intelligence (*al-kayyis*) encompasses reflective capacity and an orientation toward the Hereafter, thereby supporting the integration of HOTS and reflective spirituality. Consequently, critical thinking does not contradict spirituality; rather, it becomes a means of deepening faith.

The integration of values within critical thinking also resonates with Thomas Lickona's framework of character education, particularly the interconnected dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In MI practice, students not only understand

[20] D Zohar dan I Marshall, *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence* (Bloomsbury, 2000).
[21] J Dewey, *How we think* (D. C. Heath & Co., 1910).

the concept of environmental cleanliness but also reflect on their responsibility as *khalifah* and design concrete actions. The Prophet ﷺ said: *"The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others."* This illustrates that HOTS can function as a medium for character formation when oriented toward Islamic ethical values.

More specifically, these findings align with the concept of *ta'dib* developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, who argues that the primary goal of Islamic education is the cultivation of *adab*, understood as the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of things within the order of existence.[22] The integration of HOTS and reflective spirituality in MI indicates that analytical and evaluative activities are directed toward situating knowledge within a *tawhid* framework. As a result, thinking processes generate not only cognitive competence but also ethical and theological awareness.

In addition, Al-Ghazali's thought in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* emphasizes the necessity of integrating knowledge with the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*).[23] According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge that does not generate spiritual awareness risks distancing human beings from the purpose of their creation. The research findings, which reveal the presence of value reflection within scientific analysis, demonstrate a concrete effort to avoid intellectual reductionism. Learning, therefore, is oriented not only toward intellectual development but also toward the purification of the heart. Likewise, the concept of *insan kamil* in the Sufi tradition of Ibn ʿArabi highlights human perfection as the harmonization of rational and spiritual dimensions.[24] The integration of HOTS and spiritual intelligence in MI can thus be understood as an early foundation for cultivating *insan kamil* at the level of basic education, where critical thinking skills are nurtured alongside awareness of meaning and moral responsibility.

From an assessment perspective, the coexistence of integrative educational goals and predominantly cognitive evaluation indicates the need for a more coherent approach. John Biggs's principle of constructive alignment underscores the importance of aligning learning objectives, instructional processes, and assessment practices.[25] Within the framework of Islamic education, such alignment entails ensuring that indicators of success are not measured solely in academic terms but also reflect the depth of faith-based reflection and moral character. Consequently, the integration of spiritual intelligence and HOTS in MI represents a reconstruction of the paradigm of Islamic education that brings modern educational theory (Anderson and Krathwohl, Zohar, Dewey, Lickona, Biggs) into dialogue with the Islamic intellectual tradition (al-Attas, al-Ghazali, Ibn ʿArabi). This model has the potential to cultivate learners who are not only capable of analysis and creation but who also possess *tawhid* consciousness, reflective depth, and moral responsibility as *khalifah* on earth.

Implementation of the Model in Developing Reflective Spirituality

Classroom observations indicate that the implementation of the integrative model in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) has encouraged a tangible shift from memorization-based learning toward reflective–analytical learning. Teachers no longer dominate the classroom through one-way lectures but instead facilitate open dialogue that stimulates students' critical questioning. In several subjects, such as science and civic education, students were observed actively analyzing contextual phenomena or cases before being guided toward reflection on

[22] S M N Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1999).

[23] A H M Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din (terj. revisi)* (Dar Al-Fikr, 2010).

[24] M Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam* (Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1982).

[25] J Biggs, *Teaching for quality learning at university*, 2 ed. (Open University Press, 2003).

relevant Islamic values. These findings suggest that reflective spirituality is increasingly developed through thinking processes rather than solely through the transmission of normative doctrine.

Interviews with teachers and students further confirm that instruction is structured around three main stages: problem analysis, value-based evaluation grounded in Islamic teachings, and the formulation of meaningful creative solutions. For instance, when discussing the issue of bullying, students were asked to identify causal factors, evaluate such behavior based on Islamic moral teachings, and design preventive measures within the school environment. Teachers functioned as facilitators who posed guiding questions such as, "Which Islamic values are relevant?" or "How does this solution reflect responsibility as a Muslim?" This pattern indicates that HOTS operates as an instrument for value internalization, where processes of evaluation and creation are directly connected to moral awareness and social responsibility.

Nevertheless, field findings also reveal that the implementation of this model is not yet evenly distributed across classrooms and teachers. Some educators continue to experience difficulty in designing deep reflective questions or integrating Islamic values in a substantive rather than symbolic manner. Furthermore, cross-subject integration remains insufficiently structured, meaning that the strengthening of reflective spirituality still depends largely on individual teacher initiative. Although a madrasa culture that supports value-based dialogue has begun to emerge through routine religious activities and the habituation of *adab*, it has not yet been fully integrated with academic strategies. These findings indicate that the success of the model's implementation depends significantly on strengthening teacher competence, curricular collaboration, and institutional commitment to building a sustainable reflective ecosystem.

The shift from memorization-based learning toward reflective–analytical learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) indicates a fundamental pedagogical transformation rather than a merely cosmetic methodological adjustment. This change signals a repositioning of the teacher's role from information provider to facilitator of thinking processes. From a constructivist perspective, as articulated by John Dewey, meaningful learning occurs when students actively reflect on experience and real-life problems.[26] Observational findings showing open dialogue and critical questioning suggest that classrooms are increasingly becoming spaces of intellectual dialectic. Such processes strengthen students' capacity to construct knowledge through interaction and argumentation. Reflection is no longer positioned as a supplementary activity but as the core of learning. Consequently, spirituality is not taught dogmatically but emerges from conscious thinking processes. This shift also demonstrates an effort to integrate cognitive and affective dimensions simultaneously. In the MI context, this integration becomes the foundation for developing reflective spirituality from an early age and marks an initial step toward a more dialogical and transformative model of Islamic education.

The implementation of the stages of analysis, evaluation, and creation in classroom practice reflects the operationalization of HOTS as formulated by Anderson and Krathwohl in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy.[27] These levels are evident in students' activities when examining problems, weighing alternatives, and formulating solutions. However, within the MI context, evaluation does not stop at rational reasoning but is extended to include

[26] J Dewey, *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process* (D. C. Heath & Co., 1933).

[27] L W Anderson dan D R Krathwohl, *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives* (Longman, 2001).

consideration of Islamic values. This process illustrates an expansion of HOTS from an academic competency into an ethical instrument. For example, analyzing social phenomena such as bullying involves not only identifying causal relationships but also connecting them to Islamic moral teachings. Creative solutions are likewise oriented toward social benefit and moral responsibility. In this way, HOTS becomes a vehicle for cultivating value awareness, demonstrating that higher-order thinking can function as a bridge between knowledge and faith. This integration reinforces the argument that intellectual and spiritual intelligence need not be positioned in opposition; rather, they can mutually reinforce one another within a unified curricular framework.

From the perspective of character education, this practice aligns with Thomas Lickona's framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.[28] Analytical processes provide the cognitive foundation (knowing), value reflection fosters emotional awareness (feeling), and solution design encourages concrete action (action). These three dimensions appear integrated within the observed learning practices. Students not only recognize that bullying is wrong but also understand the moral reasoning behind it and are motivated to act. This indicates that learning extends beyond conceptual understanding. Character education develops alongside HOTS, suggesting that moral formation can be strengthened through critical thinking strategies. Thus, character is not built solely through normative instruction but through rational and reflective processes. Such a model has the potential to cultivate deeper and more sustainable moral awareness.

From the perspective of spiritual intelligence, these findings are consistent with Zohar's conception of the human capacity to construct meaning from experience.[29] The development of reflective spirituality in the classroom indicates that students are encouraged to understand reality more deeply. Knowledge is no longer perceived as isolated facts but as part of a broader framework of life meaning. Within learning activities, students are guided to connect social phenomena with their responsibility as Muslims. This process demonstrates that meaning is not transmitted instantly but constructed through dialogue and analysis. Consequently, spirituality is not confined to ritual practice but is closely related to intellectual awareness. Such integration illustrates that reflective learning can function as an authentic means of value internalization. Reflective spirituality emerges through students' active engagement in thinking processes, reinforcing the idea that spiritual intelligence can be cultivated through appropriate pedagogical approaches.

Within the framework of Islamic education, this practice aligns with the concept of *ta'dib* articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.[30] Education is understood as the cultivation of *adab* through recognizing the proper place of knowledge and values within the order of existence. When students evaluate problems based on Islamic teachings, they are learning to situate knowledge within a *tawhid*-centered framework. Thinking processes thus become a means of cultivating *adab* rather than merely an academic tool. This indicates that the integration of HOTS and spirituality possesses a strong philosophical foundation within the Islamic intellectual tradition. *Adab* is not taught separately from intellectual activity; instead, it develops through conscious analysis and reflection. In this way, education in MI is gradually moving toward a more holistic model. This integration affirms that rationality and spirituality can develop in parallel within a unified educational paradigm.

---

[28] T Lickona, *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility* (Bantam Books, 1991).

[29] Zohar dan Marshall, *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence*.

[30] Al-Attas, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*, 1999.

Al-Ghazali's thought is also relevant for interpreting these findings. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that knowledge should cultivate awareness and submission to Allah, arguing that knowledge which does not transform the heart remains incomplete.[31] Reflective learning practices in MI demonstrate an effort to avoid forms of intellectualism that are detached from moral and spiritual formation. Analytical activities do not end with conceptual mastery but are directed toward moral awareness. This suggests that cognitive processes can function as pathways for the purification of the soul. Reflective spirituality develops when students grasp the meaning underlying knowledge, allowing learning to become a medium for character formation and piety. Such integration illustrates continuity between modern educational theory and the classical Islamic intellectual tradition.

The concept of *insan kamil* articulated by Ibn ʿArabi further enriches this discussion from an anthropological–spiritual perspective.[32] *Insan kamil* represents the ideal human being whose rational and spiritual dimensions exist in harmony. Education that emphasizes only rational development risks producing fragmented personalities. The integration of HOTS and reflective spirituality in MI can therefore be interpreted as an early step toward cultivating holistic personhood. Students are trained to think critically while maintaining value-oriented awareness. This process demonstrates that rationality and faith are not opposing poles but complementary dimensions in the formation of human character. Consequently, basic education holds a strategic role in instilling this balance from an early stage.

From Biggs's perspective, the alignment of learning objectives, instructional processes, and assessment practices is central to effective learning.[33] When teachers lack the skills to design reflective questions, value integration tends to remain superficial. Consequently, pedagogical training becomes an urgent necessity. Teachers need to be equipped with the capacity to facilitate meaningful critical dialogue that supports reflective thinking. In addition, assessment practices must be able to capture reflective dimensions rather than measuring cognitive achievement alone. Without such alignment, the integrative model will struggle to develop optimally. Strengthening teacher capacity therefore emerges as a strategic priority.

Cross-subject integration also represents a structural challenge. From Ibn Khaldun's perspective, ideal education requires continuity and coherence across domains of knowledge.[34] When value integration occurs only in particular classrooms, reflective spirituality develops in a fragmented manner. Collaboration among teachers becomes essential to ensure that Islamic values are internalized consistently. Madrasa culture must support value-based dialogue across academic activities so that reflection is not confined to specific lessons but becomes a shared ecosystem. Achieving this requires strong institutional commitment and coordinated curricular practices.

Overall, this discussion indicates that the implementation of the integrative model in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) holds significant transformational potential. Its theoretical foundation is robust, drawing from both modern educational scholarship and the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. The emergence of reflective classroom practices suggests that HOTS can function as a medium for value internalization rather than merely as a cognitive framework. Nevertheless, the sustainability of this model depends on strengthening teacher competence and achieving systemic integration across curriculum, pedagogy, and

[31] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din (terj. revisi)*.

[32] Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam*.

[33] Biggs, *Teaching for quality learning at university*.

[34] Ibn Khaldun dan Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history* (Princeton University Press, 1967).

assessment. When implemented consistently, the model has the potential to cultivate learners who are both critically minded and ethically grounded. In this sense, Islamic basic education can become a space for synthesizing rationality and spirituality, positioning reflective spirituality as an integral outcome of educational practice.

Implications of the Model for the Development of Reflective Spirituality

The implementation of the integrative model combining spiritual intelligence and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) indicates a significant shift from memorization-based learning toward reflective–analytical learning. Classroom observations and interviews with fifteen teachers and sixty students reveal that learners actively participate in group discussions, evaluate social and environmental phenomena, and design solutions grounded in Islamic values. Reflective prompts such as *"What wisdom can be drawn from this phenomenon?"* and *"How should we respond as Muslims?"* encourage value internalization and the development of reflective spirituality.

Document analysis of lesson plans, teaching modules, and assessment rubrics shows that most project-based tasks (approximately 75 percent) assess both cognitive accuracy and value reflection, including the depth of students' moral reasoning. For example, students created environmental posters that combined scientific information with moral reflection. However, the implementation of reflective assessment remains uneven, as some classrooms still prioritize cognitive achievement. A learning culture supportive of reflection—such as opening prayers and reflective journals—has begun to emerge, with around 70 percent of students able to connect academic phenomena with spiritual values such as responsibility, patience, and integrity.

Teacher competence emerges as a crucial factor in the implementation of this model. Trained teachers demonstrate the ability to apply reflective inquiry by linking scientific concepts to the Islamic notion of stewardship (*amanah*) over natural resources, consistent with Islamic pedagogical principles that emphasize human responsibility as *khalifah* on earth (Qur'an 2:30). Teachers who lack such preparation experience difficulty designing reflective questions and integrating learning across subjects, resulting in inconsistent value internalization. This finding reinforces Bandura's theory of teacher efficacy, which argues that teachers' beliefs about their capabilities significantly influence instructional effectiveness and students' character development.[35]

The learning syntax observed in classrooms reveals a consistent reflective pattern: exploration of phenomena, analytical discussion, value reflection, and the formulation of creative solutions. This pattern reflects Kolb's experiential learning model, in which concrete experience is processed through reflection and abstraction to generate meaningful understanding.[36] For example, in environmental cleanliness projects, students analyze the impact of waste (analysis), evaluate community behavior (evaluation), and design practical interventions (creation) grounded in the principles of *adab* and moral responsibility. This integration confirms that HOTS does not merely develop cognitive competence but also functions as a medium for value internalization.[37]

Analysis of assessment rubrics indicates an increasing emphasis on the quality of argumentation, the relevance of Islamic principles, and the depth of students' reflections. However, most evaluations still prioritize cognitive achievement (approximately 70 percent)

[35] A Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (W. H. Freeman, 1997).

[36] D A Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Prentice-Hall, 1984).

[37] S H Nasr, *Islamic spirituality: Foundations* (ABC International Group, 2013).

over value reflection (30 percent), highlighting the need for standardized authentic assessment instruments to ensure alignment among learning objectives, instructional processes, and evaluation. This aligns with Wiggins's theory of authentic assessment, which stresses the importance of evaluating students' competencies in real-life contexts that integrate higher-order thinking skills with ethical values.[38]

Classrooms that successfully integrated science, social studies, and civic education within a single reflective project grounded in Islamic values demonstrate the transformative potential of cross-disciplinary design. This approach is consistent with Beane's theory of curriculum integration, which emphasizes holistic and interdisciplinary learning as a means of constructing meaningful understanding.[39] For example, an environmental cleanliness project combined scientific analysis, social awareness, and moral reflection, illustrating how an integrative curriculum can simultaneously cultivate spiritual consciousness and social responsibility.

The findings also underscore the importance of a madrasa culture that supports value-based reflection. Reflective rituals before and after lessons—such as collective prayer and structured value discussions—reinforce the internalization of reflective spirituality. This practice aligns with the principle of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islamic education, which emphasizes the cultivation of the soul through habituation of values and moral discipline.[40] In this sense, madrasa culture functions as a pedagogical ecosystem that enables the consistent integration of HOTS and spiritual intelligence. The model demonstrates that higher-order thinking and spiritual development can evolve simultaneously through reflective pedagogy, authentic assessment, and cross-curricular integration. It further highlights the necessity of teacher collaboration, holistic curriculum design, and strengthened pedagogical competence to nurture learners who are intellectually capable and spiritually grounded.

D. Conclusion

The integration of spiritual intelligence and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah marks a paradigm shift from memorization-centered and purely cognitive learning toward structured reflective–analytical learning. Learning outcomes now extend beyond conceptual analysis to include indicators of Islamic value reflection, enabling cognitive and spiritual dimensions to be interwoven synergistically within the formal curriculum. Classroom practices emphasize the exploration of phenomena, analytical discussion, value reflection, and the formulation of solutions grounded in moral responsibility, thereby positioning HOTS as a medium for value internalization and the development of reflective spirituality. Authentic assessment practices that evaluate both cognitive accuracy and the depth of moral and spiritual reflection have begun to emerge, although their implementation remains uneven and requires further standardization. A madrasa culture that supports reflective practice—such as opening prayers, reflective journaling, and the habituation of *adab*—is gradually fostering students' moral and ethical awareness, while teachers increasingly function as facilitators of critical dialogue guiding evaluation and creative processes through Islamic values. Although cross-curricular integration and the use of reflective questioning are not yet consistently implemented across

[38] G Wiggins, "The case for authentic assessment," *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1–3.

[39] Rabial Kanada et al., "Microteaching sebagai Pusat Sumber Belajar di Era Digital," *Jurnal Basicedu* 8, no. 3 (2024): 2430–37, https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v8i3.7806.

[40] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din (terj. revisi)*.

classrooms, field findings indicate that the model has the capacity to cultivate learners who are both critically minded and spiritually mature. The success of implementation depends largely on strengthening teacher capacity, curricular coordination, and institutional commitment to sustaining a reflective learning ecosystem. Overall, the integration of HOTS and spiritual intelligence is academically relevant and strategically significant for preparing a generation that balances intellectual competence with spiritual depth, while also highlighting the need for further development of a more systematic and standardized integrative model..

Daftar Pustaka

Al-Attas, S M N. *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1999.

Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1991.

Al-Ghazali, A H M. *Ihya' Ulum al-Din (terj. revisi)*. Dar Al-Fikr, 2010.

Anderson, L W, dan D R Krathwohl. *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman, 2001.

Arifuddin. "The development of critical thinking skills in mathematics learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah." *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam* 6, no. 2 (2019): 145–60.

Bandura, A. *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman, 1997.

Biggs, J. *Teaching for quality learning at university*. 2 ed. Open University Press, 2003.

Creswell, John W, dan Cheryl N Poth. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 4th ed. Sage Publications, 2018.

Dewey, J. *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. D. C. Heath & Co., 1933.

———. *How we think*. D. C. Heath & Co., 1910.

Fisher, Robert. *Teaching thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*. 4 ed. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Ibn Arabi, M. *Fusus al-Hikam*. Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1982.

Kanada, Rabial, Mardiah Astuti, Icha Suryana, Mia Miranti, Amelia Andini, Miftahul Jannah, dan Bunga Sadina. "Microteaching sebagai Pusat Sumber Belajar di Era Digital." *Jurnal Basicedu* 8, no. 3 (2024): 2430–37. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v8i3.7806.

Khaldun, Ibn, dan Franz Rosenthal. *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history*. Princeton University Press, 1967.

Kolb, D A. *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall, 1984.

Lickona, T. *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books, 1991.

Lincoln, Yvonna S, dan Egon G Guba. *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications, 1985.

Lipman, Matthew. *Thinking in education*. 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Miles, M. B., A. M. Huberman, dan J. Saldana. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook (3rd ed.)*. California: Sage Publications, 2014.

Nasr, S H. *Islamic spirituality: Foundations*. ABC International Group, 2013.

OECD. "OECD future of education and skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030."

OECD Publishing, 2019.

Piaget, Jean. *The psychology of the child*. Basic Books, 1972.

Rogoff, Barbara. *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Sahin, Abdullah. *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation*. Kube Publishing, 2013.

UNESCO. "Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?" UNESCO Publishing, 2015.

Wiggins, G. "The case for authentic assessment." *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1–3.

Yin, Robert K. "Robert K. Yin Case Study Research Design and Methods, Third Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol 5 2002.pdf," 2003.

Zohar, D, dan I Marshall. *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence*. Bloomsbury, 2000.