

Developing High-Order Thinking in Primary School Students through Qur’anic Stories and the *Hikmah* Pedagogy of Philosophical Inquiry

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Abstract

The *Hikmah* pedagogy (HP) is an offshoot of the Philosophy for Children Programme (P4C), a method used in teaching critical, creative and benevolent thinking based on philosophical inquiry. Slightly different from the original P4C invented by Lipman, HP emphasizes the Islamic perspectives of metaphysics, epistemology and values. Interest in this pedagogy has led Muslim scholars to develop Islamic-based stories to be used with it in the classroom. But to date, no studies involving HP have employed stories drawn from the Qur’an, the holy scripture for Muslims, for the purposes of teaching Islamic Education and improving the thinking of students within this subject. Hence, this study is an effort to fill this gap in knowledge and research on HP. The participants were 12 primary school children around the age of 10. Using the qualitative case study method with focus group discussion and participant observation in a natural setting as the main data acquisition strategies, the study explored the experiences of these primary schoolers as they discovered Qur’anic stories through HP. Over a period of eight weeks, they learned to ask high-order questions about the stories and engage in debates about the issues and core messages contained within them in a community of inquiry (COI). The objectives were to explore if the pedagogy could enhance their cognitive behaviours (i.e., HOTS) and to find out their views about the method. The findings pointed to the success of HP in improving the students’ HOTS, especially in the skills of inquiring and reasoning, their general mannerisms and interest in the Islamic Education subject. The students also felt that they had a voice in the learning process, and that their opinions were heard and accepted. Overall, the students enjoyed the method and welcomed it as a positive change in their learning of Islamic Education.

Keywords: *Hikmah pedagogy, Philosophy for Children, Islamic Studies Education, Qur’anic stories, cognitive behaviours, high-order thinking skills (HOTS)*

INTRODUCTION

Thinking Skills in Malaysian Education

The efforts to implement an education that inculcates *higher order thinking* skills (HOTS) in Malaysian schools began in the early 1990s. The efforts involved the learning of complex evaluative skills, such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving based on

Bloom's taxonomy. The importance and necessity of developing these skills in students were increasingly felt with the prominence of information and communication technology (ICT), where knowledge is made easily and widely accessible through the Internet. With the rapid strides in digital technology, teachers are no more the sages on stage, but instead, facilitators of learning, the idea of which is well-aligned with student-centred education. It is true that students of today are apt at finding learning materials on the Internet—they can do so effortlessly with little time spent on searching. But they may lack the ability to properly appraise the reliability and authenticity of the materials, and how to critically analyse the information contained therein; hence, the need for critical thinking. Having to solve problems for themselves, students need to be creative and resourceful.

The curriculum reform efforts of the Malaysian Ministry of Education were based on the National Philosophy of Education formulated in 1987, which aims to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced. The national philosophy does not make an explicit or a specific mention of critical thinking, but we can take it that it is subsumed under the *intellectual* development of students. To elucidate this intellectual component of the philosophy, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has emphasised thinking skills as one of the six key attributes that Malaysian students should possess. Hence, serious efforts have been made to develop thinking skills in students via classroom teaching, co-curricular activities, and assessments.

Thinking is defined as the process of using the mind to find meanings and understanding of something. It is also defined as a process of finding or making connections and disjunctions (Lipman, 2003). Problem solving activities, such as working on a Math word problem, reading a book to find answers or writing essays, are common focal points for thinking. Other examples of daily activities for thinking include making prudent decisions, forecasting possibilities, and making good judgment. Critical thinking is defined as "*reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do*" (Ennis, 2011, p. 1). In deciding what to believe or do, one is helped by the employment of a set of critical thinking dispositions and abilities. It is a disciplined manner of thought used to evaluate the validity of an idea. The elements of critical thinking consist of a disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and evaluating information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In Arabic, this concept of critical thinking is referred to as *tafakkur*, which Malik Badri (2000) has categorised as (a) conceptualisation of ideas or information; (b) paying attention to the information; and (c) moving closer towards the Creator, Allah SWT.

Four models of teaching thinking skills have been adopted to be used in the Malaysian classrooms: (a) The Boston Model, which was developed by Robert Swartz and D. N. Perkin; (b) the "Knowledge, What, How, Learnt (KWHL) Model"; (c) de Bono's Cognitive Research Trust (CORTs) 1 and 4, where, CORTs 1 is designed to guide students to broaden their thinking skills, while CORTs 4 focuses on creativity; and (d) Programmed Instruction in Learning and Thinking skills (PILTS), which was developed by local Malaysian academics, John A. Phillips and Fatimah Hashim (Rajendran, 2001). However, with the exception of de Bono's CORTs, these methods could not be considered favourably as thinking interventions because there seemed to be no observable changes in the thinking level of students who were taught using

these methods--nor were they widely used in classroom practices (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2003a). Although the Teacher Education Division of the MOE introduced a compulsory core course on Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (KBKK) in 1996 for preservice teachers, the course was not successful because the teachers were given more information about theories and the skills rather than the how-to.

Thus, academics continue to look for better methods of teaching thinking that will also suit the culture of the students. In this regard, one of the more recent methods that was explored was the *Hikmah* (Wisdom) Pedagogy which is based on philosophical inquiry and is an offshoot of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme founded by Matthew Lipman, an American philosophy professor based in New Jersey, U.S. Lipman (1980) recommended teaching thinking through philosophy because of its unique and intellectually adventurous approach. He asserts that education must be transformed to make thinking, rather than knowledge, its central priority. The *Hikmah* Pedagogy (HP) was introduced in Malaysia by Rosnani Hashim, a philosophy of education professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia, to suit the Islamic culture of the Muslim students in the country. *Hikmah* Pedagogy was introduced through the establishment of the Centre for Philosophical Inquiry in Education at the IIUM's Faculty of Education in 2006.

Upon her training at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), New Jersey in 2001, Rosnani conducted a number of experimental studies on HP beginning in selected primary schools through initially language classes – Malay and English -- and later focused on Islamic Studies classes (Rosnani, 2003b). Malaysia, being a country where the majority of its population are Muslims and follow Islam as the official religion, has made the study of Islamic Education as a focal point in its education system. For the *Hikmah* Pedagogy lessons and training, Rosnani authored children's novels, *Mira* for primary schools and *Sarah* for secondary schools. The stories included verses from the Qur'an and were designed to make students reflect on important concepts like knowledge, freedom, rights, prayers, God's existence, God's greatness, justice, time, and death, and values such as taking turns, honesty, helping others, respect and patriotism. The *Hikmah* pedagogy aims to enhance thinking skills, communication skills, open mindedness, and self-confidence (Rosnani, 2017a).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Qur'an and Thinking

The foundation of Islam is the Qur'an, which is a book of guidance for all mankind: "*This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah*" (Al-Baqarah: 2). The Qur'an is *the* authority over the Muslim community, whereby the principles of every aspect of life and death, past and present, faith and practice, God and prophethood, the universe, purpose of life, human nature, knowledge, ethics, the unseen world and the hereafter, as well as issues and problems affecting mankind, are outlined in this Holy book. The content of the Qur'an consists of warnings, good tidings, parables and stories that guide Muslims during their life journey on this earth.

The Qur'an was sent down in Arabic and has been translated into many languages today. It can only act as a guide if it is read and reflected upon. Thus, if one does not know Arabic, then understanding it from translation and interpretation is important. Many Muslims are non-Arabs and they can read the Qur'an in Arabic but frequently without understanding. Although one does not understand the Qur'an, reading it is therapeutic for the mind, body and soul. However, it can only be a book of guidance if Muslims reflect upon it in the language they understand. Reflecting upon the Qur'an will draw readers—Muslim and non-Muslim alike--back to the universe and the spiritual world too. Despite the healing power of the Qur'an and the enlightenment that can be gained from it, not many Muslims take the effort to understand it as evident from this verse:

“We do not create the heaven and earth and all between them, merely in (idle) sport. We created these not except for just ends: but most of them do not understand.” (Ad-Dukhan: 38-39)

The Qur'an itself calls upon the believers to think, ponder, reflect and contemplate on its verses. The verses are not meant for meaningless chanting. Besides *tafakkur*, the Qur'an uses many other terms that are related to thinking, such as *tabassur* (insight), *tadabbur* (pondering), *tadhakkur* (admonition) and *tafaqquh* (comprehend and understand). As explained by Badi and Tajdin (2005), “people differ in their level of thinking based on the depth of their faith, their ability to focus and concentrate, emotional and intellectual state, environmental factors, degree of knowledge and familiarity with what they think about and its essence” (p. 2). Allah mentions in the Qur'an through the following verse that the worst people are those that do not use their reason or thinking:

“Truly, the worst of all creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf, the dumb, those who do not use their reason/think.” (Al-Anfal: 22)

Methods of Teaching Islamic Education (IE)

The Qur'an is the fundamental source of all Qur'anic sciences, i.e., faith and belief; fiqh/worship (e.g., prayers, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage); ethics and moral values; marriage, business dealings, human psychology, sociology, and others. It employs a variety of methods to convey the message, and most important of all, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) that manifest the teachings of Islam. Among the methods it uses are--reflecting upon creation; giving warnings and glad tidings; using analogies, metaphors, similes and persuasion; asking questions to provoke thought; interrogation into the spiritual realm; calling for the use of empirical approaches like observation and demonstration in acquiring knowledge; travelling to places to see the world, cultures and histories of the past; using the inductive approach to develop reasoning; and most of all, narrating stories of past events experienced by the major prophets (Rosnani, 2004). Methods aside, the most important agent in teaching is the teacher himself/herself, who should be creative and innovative, and who must internalize and embody the Qur'anic values that are to be passed on to students. In others, one must practice what one preaches, especially if one is a teacher. The Qur'an is emphatic about this:

“Do you enjoin right conduct on the people and forget (to practise it) yourselves, and yet you study the Scripture? Will you not understand?” (Al-Baqarah: 44).

However, if we look at IE classes in schools today, we cannot help but notice that they are mainly preoccupied with didactic methods and activities, such as memorizing verses of the Qur’an and rendering their proper reading in Arabic. In these activities, little time and emphasis are given to understanding and reflection. The other non-Qur’anic contents like *aqidah* (faith), moral values and ethics, and the prophet’s life history (*sirah*) are conveyed via chalk-and-talk with extensive note taking by students, while *fiqh* or worship lessons tend to be hands-on or practice-oriented. The assessments are inclined to testing students’ recall of the facts acquired, or other low-order thinking skills such providing verbatim definitions of terms. Based on what could be observed happening in Islamic education classes so far, the teaching and learning really lacks an emphasis on thinking and reflection. These observations are substantiated by several studies on Islamic education teaching methods (Maimun & Roslan, 2005; Rosnani *et al.*, 2017b; Rosnani *et al.*, 2018). Some attempts have been made to improve the quality of teaching by introducing the HP or other instructional methods used in various studies (Jasmi, 2013; Juhasni, 2013; Kaziman, 2015; Lina Murshidah, 2015).

Maimun and Roslan (2005) found through a survey that lecturing, giving advice, rote learning and answering questions were the most popular teaching strategies employed by primary and secondary school teachers in Brunei, while visualization strategies, field trips, role play, problem solving, memorizing and storytelling were less popular. Meanwhile, Nora, Arifin, and Adnan (n.d.) found that “the most popular methodology used in the teaching of Islamic education is direct instruction that is oriented towards rote learning and factual emphasis” (p. 153). The teaching methods for IE are often poor and ineffective because rote learning and teacher-centredness are still widely adhered to. In IE classes, students are often required to play a passive role.

Jasmi (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the active learning approach employed by eight excellent Islamic education teachers in Malaysia through interviews and document analysis (i.e., examination of their lesson plans). He found that when active learning took place where the teacher acted as facilitator, rather than purveyor of information, and the students were actively engaged in the lessons, they did not easily forget what they learnt. They made an effort to search for information, discussed and presented their findings more eloquently and confidently than they did in the usual didactic lessons. Juhasni (2013) found that Form Two students’ abilities to ask questions in IE classes improved after the use of HP. In a case study, she observed an IE class utilising HP and analysed the questions students had raised based on the stimulus material. Based on interviews and focus group discussion, the study found that the students liked the method, their thinking grew more in-depth, they asked questions confidently and communicated more eloquently, and their scope of discussion went beyond the textbook. Other studies (Kaziman, 2015; Lina Murshidah, 2015) that employed the same method on Form Four students in a fully residential school and a private secondary school reported the same results that showed an increasing trend in the HOTS questions at the levels of evaluation, synthesis and analysis; and improvement in the students’ thinking skills, their ability to ask questions, and increase in their confidence level in communication.

Stories in the Holy Qur'an

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) over a period of 23 years; ten years in Mecca, and thirteen years after he migrated to Madinah. Kazmi (2000) wrote that history is 'his-story', which is a narrative account of events that unfold in time. Thus, the chapters or *surahs* of the Qur'an were divided in accordance to the places that they were revealed. Some of these chapters or verses recount stories that happened in remote times and places. According to the descriptions, some of them relate to ancient events in different lands and people. One third of the Qur'an is filled with stories that serve as reminders, a guide, a mercy and a source of knowledge and life lessons. Allah proclaims:

"There is, in their stories instruction for men endowed with understanding. It is not a tale invented but a confirmation of what went before it – a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to for a people who believe." (Yusuf: 111)

These stories contain lessons and divine admonition from the Almighty God. They are neither told in chronological order nor do they explicitly mention any names, numbers, or nations. Sometimes the stories are repeated in different chapters but emphasising the different perspectives. Qur'anic stories are not exclusive, but rather universal. There are stories about Prophet Moses and Pharaoh, as stated in *Surah Qasas*, verses 2 to3:

"These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear. We rehearse to thee some of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Truth, for people who believe." (Qasas: 2-3)

These stories of the ancient past were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) so that he would be able to narrate the events to his followers, even when he had not personally witnessed them. Another is the story of Mary and the miraculous birth of Isa (Jesus) a.s.:

"So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing, forgotten and out of sight! "But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee. "And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee." (Maryam: 22 -25)

In the chapter of Maryam, Allah shows how He has the knowledge and power to create what He wishes. This is a story of men being tested by Allah, and of how they survived with the help of Allah. This one unique chapter is not only devoted to Maryam and her son, Isa, but to other prophets as well who also went through hardships, disappointments, and triumphs for the sake of their faith. These stories are not just mere stories. In them contain various tangible and non-tangible elements, which could be derived with a good method and proper instruction.

Research Problem

The learning of Islamic Education as a school subject begins at an early age from preschool up to Form Five in secondary schools, which amounts to 12 years of exposure to the Qur'an. However, the stories in the Quran are not fully integrated into the learning and teaching syllabus (DSKP, 2013). IE for the upper level stated its sixth objective as follows: "*Students should be able to understand and to learn from the life of the Prophet, the caliphs, and Muslim scholars*" (DSKP, 2013, p. 2). This basically implies that children only have to learn about the *history* of the prophets, caliphs, and scholars of Islam, but in practice, so much is emphasised on reading and memorising the Qur'an in primary schools.

In most cases, such as in the *tahfiz* (Qur'an memorisation) schools, the learning and teaching session is very much teacher-centred. The students will listen while the teacher transfers his or her knowledge. It is not surprising that most of the students do not understand the lessons being taught (Paizah *et al.*, 2014), much less to apply them in their daily lives (Kaziman, 2015). The class can easily become boring, lifeless, and passive because of the absence of a two-way communication between the teacher and the students (Kaziman, 2015). Perhaps it has been the culture of the past, where the teacher talks and students must listen intensely and quietly.

Muslim students who attended Islamic primary schools have also experienced the exclusion of learning stories in the Qur'an as part of the syllabus (Kaziman, 2015). Students learn the stories in the Qur'an only at the level of knowing and understanding, which did not leave any impressions on them. However, certain parties are aware of these shortcomings. Meanwhile, the Croydon Syllabus for Religious Education in the UK (2013) had also included stories in their syllabus for Islamic Education. The only shortcoming is the stories suggested in their Key Stage of learning are only about *Bilal* and The Two Brothers. These stories are part of the introduction to religious education for the school.

The stories in the Qur'an are actual histories; events related to the previous people, and of the prophets and messengers of Allah, but the Qur'an is neither a history book nor a biography (Kazmi, 2000). The stories of the people and the places mentioned are for the benefit of the present community or ummah, who should pass them on to the future generation. Therefore, the content of the Qur'an should be deeply analysed for its relevance to Muslims' physical, spiritual and intellectual development. Islamic education researchers found that many teachers often resorted to lectures and applied poor and ineffective teaching methods (Abdul Halim, as cited in Zaiton & Hishamuddin, 2013; Maimun & Ruslan, 2005; Nora, Arifin & Adnan, n.d., and Rosnani *et al.*, 2017b, 2018). Thus, this study is an attempt to address the gap in having philosophical inquiry as an instructional intervention.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study aimed to determine the suitability and effectiveness of using HP with stories from the Quran to enhance the cognitive behaviours of students in the Community of Inquiry (COI). Thinking in the context of this study is measured in terms of these cognitive behaviours, and

students' ability to relate the stories to their life issues. The three cognitive behaviours of COI and some of the observable conducts are shown in Table 1. The study also explored the students' ability to relate events in the Qur'anic stories to their life problems through HP, and how they view it as a teaching method.

Table 1
Cognitive Behaviours of COI and Indicators

Cognitive Behaviour	Indicators
Inquiry Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asks relevant questions 2. Asks for claims to be supported with evidence 3. Readily builds on other students' ideas
Open Mindedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can accept reasonable criticisms 2. Welcomes opposing views 3. Receptive to other students' ideas
Reasoning Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offers appropriate analogies 2. Draws suitable inferences 3. Seeks to clarify ill-defined concepts

Sources: Rosnani (2015). *Hikmah Pedagogy for Teaching Critical Thinking and Other Soft Skills: Notes for Teachers*; Lipman (1991). *Thinking in Education*.

The research questions were: (1) Are there improvements in students' cognitive behaviours after following the HP lessons? (2) Was HP able to improve students' ability to relate the Qur'anic stories to their life problems? (3) What are the students' views of HP as a teaching method for Islamic Education?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology and focused on an exploratory case study approach. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a system (e.g., activity, event, or process) in its natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The basic idea for a case study is that a case or a phenomenon will be studied in detail using appropriate methods (Punch, 2009). In this case, the researcher could gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon by seeking the participants' responses in interviews and focus group discussion and via participant observation. The HP was employed using the stories in the Qur'an as the stimulus material. The teacher was the participant observer as she was taking notes of all events mentally as a researcher and then quickly wrote her field notes after teaching. She observed the teacher's use of HP and pupils' cognitive behaviours and interaction again in the recorded lessons after the physical classroom observation.

Table 2
Summary of the Chapters, Leading Ideas and Values

Session	Chapters	Leading Ideas	Values
1 & 2	105 Al Fil verses 1-5	Disobeying Allah Appreciating Allah's creations	Appreciation Being humble
3 & 4	18 Al Kahfi verses 32-42	The attitude of mankind Arrogance	Being thankful <i>Tawakkal</i>
5 & 8	12 Yusuf verses 7-18	Envy Characteristics of a Muslim	Honesty Love and respect
6 & 7	27 An Naml verses 15-19	Knowledge Being educated	Being responsible Gratitude

Intervention

The questions on the Qur'anic stories were developed using philosophical inquiry which is the Socratic method, in order to probe deeper into the topic of study. The participants were allowed to deliberate during discussion sessions as members of a community of inquiry in HP. In the Socratic-style discussions about the stories, the researcher acted as a thinking facilitator and a participant observer, and asked a few questions, probed the students or coaxed responses. The participants in turn had their own questions for inquiries besides responding to the facilitator and the other students. The dialogue and discussion generated by the community of students generated extensive data.

Procedures and Instruments

To answer the first research question on improvement in cognitive behaviours, the study employed classroom observations of the lesson through participant observation and also video recording which was later transcribed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). A cognitive behaviour checklist (refer to Table 1) was used to code and classify the behaviours demonstrated.

For the second research question on students' ability to relate the Qur'anic stories to their life problems through the use of HP for their lessons, the data was collected from a focus group interview with three of the students. The study sessions were also recorded on audio and video for transcription of the scenes. This also allowed the researcher to return to the collected data in their original form as often as she wishes (Silverman, 2005).

Participants were advised to carefully listen to the responses of each individual in the community of student inquirers before responding or building upon the responses further. The advantage of having a small group is that the interactions between the participants are likely to yield the best information when they are cooperative. For every session, the steps shown in Table 3 were adhered to.

Table 3
Procedures for Each Session of the Study

Procedures	Details
1 Seating	The students sat in a semi-circle or a horseshoe position
2 Reading	The students took turn to read the text, which was either the Qur'an or photocopied pages of the selected stories.
3 Questionings	After the reading session, the teacher initiated the inquiry by asking comprehension questions about the passage to check for understanding. After that the students were then asked to pose their questions related to the story. They wrote the questions on the board for everyone to see.
4 Discussions	The questions were classified into themes, and were discussed accordingly.
5 Closure	The discussion ended by summarising the morals behind each story, and by making conclusions pertaining to the objectives of the lessons.

The researcher who was also the facilitator, went through six sessions of training with an HP expert, who guided and observed the session through video recording and by being in person during some of the lessons in the pilot as well as the actual study. The participants in the actual study attended eight sessions which lasted approximately an hour each.

Based on the video recording of the session, the researcher made the transcription of the session. The transcript was repeatedly read over time to get a general view of the recorded data. In analysing the data, the researcher took notes of important themes and subthemes that emerged from the transcript using colour coding. The following were some of the methods used to analyse the dialogue for determining the thinking progress (Fisher, 2013):

- Tracking the whole discussions, discourse or cognitive behaviours
- Tracking one cognitive feature or barrier
- Identifying segments of the discussion that have a particular focus
- Identifying evidence of critical thinking, i.e., the cognitive behaviours.

Example of Data Analysis from Session One

The first session dealt with Chapter 105: *Surah Al-Fil* (The Elephant) which has five verses shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Translation of Chapter 105: *Surah Al-Fil* (The Elephant)

Verse	English translation of the verses
1	Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the Owners of the Elephant
2	Did He not make their plot go astray?
3	And He sent against them flocks of birds.
4	Striking them against stones of baked clay
5	And thus made them like broken straw eaten up

After reading the translation one by one, the students then raised questions – sometimes with a partner and sometimes alone. They raised these questions verbally or wrote them on the board.

Some sample questions are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Questions and Themes in Session 1

No	Questions	Themes
1	Why did Allah send down birds, and not other animals?	Birds
2	Why did Allah send so many birds?	Birds
3	Why did Abrahah duplicate the Kaabah in Mekah?	Kaabah/place
4	Why did Allah send down birds carrying baked clay and not other things?	Stones/weapon
5	Why didn't people want to go to Abrahah's place?	Abrahah/place

The students were able to ask relevant and HOTS questions, as seen in Table 5. They displayed appropriate reasoning skills to answer the questions. For example, in DU133-DU135 they gave various reasons to explain why the people did not go to Abrahah's place. They were able to build on the ideas of others as in the case of "quietness" from duR136-DU141. However, nobody asked the other student inquirers for evidence to support their claim.

duR132 Which question do you want to discuss? Number 5? Why didn't people go to Abrahah's place?

DU133 Abrahah asked people to do things they didn't want to do.

DU134 Because he didn't do it with good intention and not sincere.

DU135 It's quiet.

duR136 Nobody went there because it's quiet?

DU137 Because the church was not built by the order of Allah.

duR138 If we have a new school and nobody goes there, then there must be something wrong, right?

DU139 Because Abrahah wanted to show off that he could build a better building.

DU140 It was boring, nothing there

DU141 There were lots of statues (idols)

Every utterance was assigned a discourse unit with specific codes. For example, DU is a discourse unit by a student and duR is a discourse unit by the researcher.

Similarly, the students were able to offer appropriate analogies. In DU154, one student gave an analogy from her experience about being forced to eat a dish she did not like and her reaction to it.

duR151 So this question about going to his place.....people don't like being forced to go. So, that was why lots of people in Mecca. For example, if we look at a baby and force him to eat, how would he react to it

DU152 He throw up and cried

duR153 So he would cry loudly, but if he's willing, he would eat, right? Just like you..... Okay, give me an example of being willing and not.

DU154 My mom forced me to eat laksa and I don't want to, I don't like laksa.

DU133,
134 and
135 ***How do you feel about it?***
DU156 *angry*
DU157 *upset*

They were also able to draw suitable inferences, i.e., that they could see people taking advantage of the situation (DU79). But there were no questions seeking to clarify any unclear concepts or ideas:

duR76 ***If they stayed a long time, how do they feed themselves?***
DU77 *They are people selling things, they have tourist package*
duR78 ***oh.....they have package? (laughter) So besides worshipping they also went trading and making business. Why do they do business?***
DU79 *There are lots of people, so they can make lots of profits if they do business*

There was visible evidence of open-mindedness (see DU133-134; DU139-141). Nobody objected to the responses. They respected it, but two other behaviours (i.e., accepting reasonable criticisms and welcoming thoughts from the other side) were not observed.

Table 6 documents the presence of cognitive behaviours indicative of HOTs of the community of inquiry (COI), namely inquiry skills, open-mindedness, and reasoning skills. Each cognitive behaviour has three skills. As seen in the table, there was a lack of evidence for the behaviour of asking evidence for claims, seeking clarification for vague concepts, and open-mindedness since there was no objection or criticism to any one person's views.

Table 6
Analysis of Cognitive Behaviours of COI in Session 1

	Cognitive Behaviour	Presence	Evidence from Verbatim
Inquiry skills	Asks relevant questions	√	DU67, DU68, DU69, DU70
	Asks claims to be supported by evidence	X	
	Readily builds on the ideas of others	√	DU133, DU134, DU135, DU137, DU138, DU140, DU141
Open mindedness	Accepts reasonable criticism	X	
	Welcomes hearing from the other side	X	
	Respects others and their rights	√	DU133, DU134
Reasoning skills	Offers appropriate analogies	√	DU152, DU153, DU154, DU155, DU156, DU157
	Draws suitable inferences	√	DU77, DU79
	Seeks to clarify ill-defined concept	X	

The same procedures of analysis were followed for all eight lessons. The next section discusses the findings and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cognitive Behaviours of the Community of Inquiry: Improvement of Thinking Indicators

Figure 1 shows the increasing trends set by the number of questions and the number of cognitive behaviours that occurred during the study's entire eight sessions. Table 7 shows the trends set by inquiry skills, open-mindedness, and reasoning skills performed during the discussion in the study. However, some parts of the conversation in Session 3 were missing as the researcher had failed to secure the data, which explained the steep decline in cognitive behaviours.

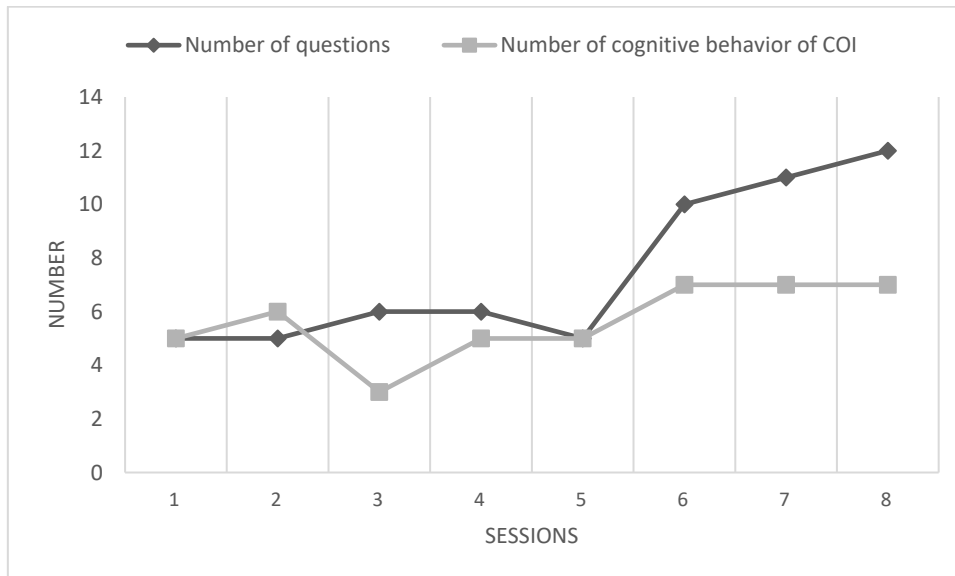


Figure 1: Trends in Number of Questions and Number of Cognitive Behaviours of COI

Based on Table 7, it is evident that all behaviours in inquiry skills and reasoning skills were observed at the end of the sessions, except for asking for evidence in making a claim and seeking clarification for a vague concept. Students were only able to ask relevant questions, and build on the ideas of others during the earlier five sessions. None was asking claims to be supported by evidence until the 6th session. The reasoning skills can be detected when the students performed appropriate analogies, drew suitable inferences, and sought to clarify ill-defined concepts. These performances were based on the responses or questions they posed.

Table 7
Summary of Cognitive behaviours of COI Performed in the Eight HP Sessions

Cognitive behaviour / sessions		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Inquiry skills	Asks relevant questions	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Asks claims to be supported by evidence	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	√
	Readily builds on the ideas of others	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
TOTAL		2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3

Table 7 Continued

Cognitive behaviour / sessions		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Open mindedness	Accepts reasonable criticism	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Welcomes hearing from the other side	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Respects others and their rights	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
TOTAL		1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Reasoning skills	Offers appropriate analogies	√	√	X	√	X	√	√	√
	Draws suitable inferences	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Seeks to clarify ill-defined concepts	X	√	X	X	√	√	√	√
TOTAL		2	3	1	2	2	3	3	3
Grand Total		5	6	(3)	5	6	7	7	7

For example, in Session 6, they were able to discuss deeper issues about knowledge and the reasons it was bestowed to Prophet Solomon in DU82, DU85 and DU87:

duR81 *So why did Allah give ilm (knowledge) to Sulaiman and Daud?*

In fact, why did Allah give more knowledge to all the prophets?

DU82 *To teach about Allah and Islam.*

duR83 *Do you agree with AI (DU82)? Why?*

DU84 *Chorusdifficult.*

DU85 *It's difficult to teach Islam.*

duR86 *Yes, it's difficult. They have to go places, to find people and to ask them to become Muslims.*

DU87 *So many people don't want to be Muslims, to follow the teachings"*

The trends in Table 7 shows that these behaviours had increased after almost half of the sessions were done. In Sessions 1, 3, 4 and 5, the students had only performed two of the three reasoning skills observed for the study. Towards the end of the sessions, all behaviours of reasoning skills were observed. This finding supports the study by Khamisah (2015) who found that "the children listened to others, shared their own connections, and learned to take turns" (p. 83). It has also been proven by several other studies (Preece, 2013; Rosnani, Suhailah & Adila, 2014) that showed the improvement of reasoning abilities, personal growth of self-confidence, open-mindedness, communication and inquiry skills following the HP intervention.

However, students were still lacking in open-minded behaviours. Accepting reasonable criticisms was not observed because no one within the group had criticised anything during the discussions. Similarly, there were also no elements of welcoming hearing 'the other side of the

case' because no one was making a case against the issues. However, students were able to show respect for others and their rights. They listened to their friends, spoke in an orderly manner, and took turns to speak up their mind. Towards the end of the study, only the open-minded behaviour of "respecting others and their rights" was detected from the verbatim records. The major reason for the non-existence of "accept reasonable criticisms" was that no one openly critiqued anything during the discussions. Perhaps, it is due to the culture or upbringing commonly found in the Malay society that it is rude to openly voice out a critique or criticism towards others in public. Or it could be that these two abilities of open-mindedness would take longer to develop in students due to their complexity or higher degree of challenge they entail.

Ability to Relate the Qur'anic Stories to Their Lives

This section attempts to find the relevance of the stories in the chapters of the Qur'an to students' lives. Many of these students were aware of their social environment, and events that occurred in their lives. Students related their current situations to the elements found in the stories. For example, in Sessions 1 and 2 in the story of the elephants. In this discussion we were able to see from DU78 and DU80 how the students related the story of the birds destroying the army of elephants by throwing baked clay at them as having similarity to the war and unrest in Palestine where the birds represented fighter jets throwing bombs on the Palestinians.

- duR60:** If you are above and they are down below, who do you think will have more advantage?
 DU61: The birds – up in the sky
 duR75: It's quite similar, isn't it, when we are above something, the people below are unaware of us, agree?
 DU 76: Chorusnoo
duR77 *Why not? Isn't it happening now in this verse, when Allah sends the birds to attack the elephants?*
 DU78 *Yes in Palestine, they use jets to throw bombs*
duR79 *What about tanks? Which is better? If they use tanks, what will happen?*
 DU80 *The tanks will be blown up if the jets drop the bombs.*

The community of inquiry also discussed the unwillingness of the people to go and pay homage to Abraham's building in Yemen, which Abraham built to distract them from going to Mecca which had the Ka'abah. They were able to give reasons for this unwillingness by comparing the different contexts, as in DU148 and DU150, and even made an appropriate analogy that is related to their own situation, such as that offered in DU154:

- duR147** *Imagine, you don't want to be there?*
 DU148 *It's like being forced*
duR149 *You mean to say that people were forced to go there?*
What about Mecca?
 DU150 *It's voluntarily, willingly*
 DU154 *My mom forced me to eat laksa and I don't want to, I don't like laksa.*

duR155 *How do you feel about it?*

DU156 *Angry*

DU157 *Upset*

Further analogies based on students' present lives can be detected in DU64, during the discussion of Surah Yusuf in Sessions 5 and 8, which was the story of Prophet Joseph and his brothers who plotted to get rid of him due to envy. A student described the characteristics of an untrustworthy person based on his own experience:

duR61 *Ok, what makes you distrust a person?*

DU62 *Not trustworthy.*

duR63 *How? Give an example.*

DU64 *If he's asked to care for a book, he will rip off the book.*

They were also able to relate to more serious matters, such as the environment and global events, similar to the story of the two farmers in *Surah Al-Kahfi* in Sessions 3 and 4. The story was about the arrogance of a rich farmer that contrasted with the humility of a poor farmer in regard to their produce. The participants could relate the punishment of the rich farmer to their experience of present-day disasters as discussed in DU81, DU82, DU83 and DU85:

duR49 *Yes, but how was his garden destroyed?*

DU50 *Eaten by animals*

duR51 *What did it say in the verse? Allah sent storms or water ran dry?*

DU52 *The river dried*

duR80 *Did we see anything like that happen?*

DU81 *There were floods in Kelantan (a state in Malaysia)*

DU82 *Hot waves in Perlis.....Perak..... (two states in Malaysia)*

DU83 *There were haze.....flood.....drought.....el-Nino (the name of the storm)*

duR84 *What happened in Pahang? (another state)*

DU85 *Tsunami in 2004.....landslide.*

They even related the story to environmental issues, as in DU120, DU121 and DU127:

duR119 *What happens when we neglect them? What happened in Kelantan? Why did it flood?*

DU120 *The river was blocked*

DU121 *People throw rubbish into the river*

duR122 *Are rivers important to us?*

DU123 *Chorus.....yes*

duR124 *But we don't take care of them?*

DU125 *People don't care*

duR126 *We have to care for these things, our rivers, our jungle.....why?*

DU127 *If we don't have trees, we don't get oxygen for living.*

In another discussion of the story of the two farmers in *Surah Al-Kahfi*, they related the gist of the event to *iman* or faith, and believing in the unseen, as evidenced in DU157, DU158 and DU159:

- duR151** ***Why didn't the disbeliever [in the story] believe in Allah?***
DU156 *He doesn't pray to Allah.*
DU157 *He can't see Allah.*
DU158 *He doesn't believe Allah created us.*
DU159 *He didn't believe Allah created his gardens.*

Students' Views of the HP Method

Three of the 12 students volunteered for the focus group interview to explore their learning experiences with the HP method. From the interviews, it was found that they preferred learning Islamic Education via the HP method, which they felt was different from their regular method of learning. Students highlighted that their usual lessons were boring and involved a lot of note-taking, which confirmed the findings of past research (e.g., Nora *et al.*, n.d.) that listening to teacher talk and routine note-taking dominated the teaching of Islamic Education:

- duR** *Do you prefer this method compared to the usual method in learning Islamic Education?*
DU36 ***Our usual class is boring, there are lots of notes***
DU37 ***Teacher wants us to do this and that, we take orders from them, and follow instructions, we can't say other things***
duR *Is the method the same?*
DU40 ***It's different, the usual way is reading and taking notes, writ[ing] answers to questions. In this class, we ask the questions for better understanding of the story.***
DU41 *You accept our opinion.*

Students did not like the fact that they *did not have a voice* in their learning, and appreciated how in HP their opinions counted for something in the COI discussions. They admitted further that they felt no stress in learning in the COI, and were liberated from taking notes:

- duR** *What do you like about this method?*
DU5 *We get to know the story, like Yusuf, about his brothers and their plans.*
DU6 ***There was no stress, learning in a group.***
duR *Do you like studying in groups?*
DU7 *Yes, no notes, no paper work.*

The students agreed that the HP sessions and learning in a COI had stepped up their confidence level through analysing their fellow friends' answers and questions before drawing their own conclusions.

- DU10* Our questions were answered, even for hard questions.
DU11 **We can give ideas, and they will discuss it, right or wrong.**
DU12 We get to know their opinions, too.
DU13 **Yes, about their preferences, things they disagree which maybe right maybe wrong.**

Furthermore, they also felt that they had improved in their attitude and mannerisms. They believed that they had become more polite and were able to listen to others. During the initial session, the students were wanting to be heard but were not listening. Their voices were loud, and they shouted out their questions and opinions. As observed by the student in the interview in DU29, DU31, DU 32, DU34, DU35 and DU36;

- duR* What has improved in you by attending this class? (i.e., knowledge, manners, etc)
DU29 **I think better (now) and speak better too.**
DU30 Language and attitude.
duR Which attitude?
DU31 **Manners and hard working.**
duR What kind of changes can you feel about yourself?
DU32 **I don't feel confident to ask at first, I feel shy to say anything, but after a while, I feel brave and confident enough.**
DU33 There are others who began to speak, not shouting in the class.
DU34 **They have more manners now.**
DU35 **They speak more calmly and politely.**
DU36 **Their opinions were more polite, we become closer as friends.**

When applying the P4C method, Lipman (1998) used philosophical stories for his lessons. In line with Hikmah Pedagogy (Rosnani, 2013) which bears the same concept, this study had selected stories from the Qur'an for use as the stimulus materials. The students found the Qur'anic stories relevant and useful:

- duR* Do you think the PI subject should include stories of prophets in the Qur'an?
DU42 **Yes, to widen our knowledge, like we know when and why we use certain doa and get to know the stories of prophets.**
DU43 **The stories are unique.**
DU44 We want to know what happened, why it happened.
DU45 **We want to learn the Qur'an and debate [about issues].**

The students believed that it is necessary for them to learn the stories directly from the Qur'an itself, and not learning them from other sources as the story versions would differ across sources. This would also help to clarify any doubt they might have about the messages of the stories.

- duR* Why do you want to learn the stories in the Qur'an?
DU46 **We want learn so that we know the origin of the stories**

- DU47* We want to know if the stories are true.
duR It's in the Qur'an, it should be true.
DU48 **There are times when we hear the stories from others, it's different every time, we don't know which is correct.**
DU49 **We want to be sure of the stories, we can be sure if we study it.**

Lastly, they asserted that HP, as a teaching method, should be applied in all subjects in schools.

- duR* Do you have anything else to say?
DU50 **I feel we need this type of class.**
DU51 **I feel happy if we can learn like this in Islamic Education classes.**
duR Only Islamic Education classes?
DU52 **No, I.....think for all the subjects.**

In essence, the findings allowed us to conclude that a *Hikmah* Pedagogy that is specially infused with stories from the Qur'an is able to garner students' interest in Islamic Education, improve their thinking skills, and bring about positive changes in their learning and mannerisms. The students in this study, specifically, became more reflective and inquisitive, and more open to different points of view. They thoroughly enjoyed the learning process in which they had a voice. On top of that, their voice was heard and accepted. This led to their finding meaning in the IE lessons. Their communication skills and self-confidence had also improved. They became more creative in thinking, and experienced a closer bonding with fellow students and the teacher. Our study has shown how *Hikmah* Pedagogy has successfully changed the way students learned Islamic Education. In a *Hikmah* Pedagogy class, students do not need to memorise the facts or be too examination conscious. They can discuss their ideas freely without fear since this method focuses more on providing reasons, evidence, persuasive arguments, examples, and clarification.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has accomplished the objectives of exploring the stories in the Qur'an using the *Hikmah* Pedagogy. It has provided concrete empirical evidence that the application of *Hikmah* Pedagogy can result in favourable changes in students' cognitive behaviours, i.e., their higher-order thinking, especially in reasoning and inquiry. With HP, students were liberated from the old methods of note-taking and memorising, and answering questions provided by someone other than themselves. Moreover, this method provided them with the opportunity to explore questions on things that captured their interest, instead of the typical note-taking and just listening to their teachers who were very subject-centred in their teaching approach. HP allowed the students' minds to become critical in examining the plausibility of their questions, in addition to encouraging them to be creative in coming up with defensible answers to their questions.

The discussions showed that these primary school students were able to delve into the meanings and values of the ideas incorporated in the stories. They had also searched for moral values by reflecting upon themselves and the events of their lives. By philosophising, the

Qur'an will become more meaningful to their lives and more appealing for their minds to continue to ponder upon.

It is hoped that this method of teaching will make Islamic Studies Education more interesting, enjoyable and meaningful. It is high time that we help our children to free their minds and thinking from the cocoon that has entrapped them and bound their teachers to a rigid exam-oriented system. Learning should be the best time for children to enjoy discovering and gain important skills for their future. By using effective instructional methods like HP, we stand a better chance at nurturing our youth and children into a thinking future generation with capabilities and characteristics that are consistent with the goals of the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education.

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