Implementation of a Philosophical Framework to Foster Critical Thinking in Islamic Education for Boarding School Students in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian Islamic education, with its rich traditions, must change quickly to keep up with the times. This study investigates how philosophical frameworks are used in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, and how they affect students' development of critical thinking abilities. A mixed-methods approach was used in the research, incorporating document analysis, observations, interviews, and surveys. With an average score of 3.78, the quantitative results showed a moderate level of philosophical framework integration within the program. With an average score of 4.21, students felt they had significantly improved their critical thinking abilities, indicating the usefulness of these frameworks. These outcomes were supported by qualitative data that emphasized students' excitement, teachers' acknowledgment of their ability, and administrators' support. Obstacles such limited resources, cultural awareness, and the requirement for teacher preparation were noted. Nonetheless, there are advantages to these difficulties as well, such as the chance to foster critical thinking and global competency. The study provides guidance for curriculum creators and policy makers, highlighting the possible advantages of incorporating philosophical frameworks into the larger educational environment.

Keywords: Philosophical Framework, Critical Thinking, Islamic Education, Boarding School Students, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a crucial role in nurturing individuals who are well-versed in their faith and equipped with critical thinking skills necessary for addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia have been foundational institutions for the transmission of religious knowledge and values. These institutions provide a unique context for the integration of educational innovations [1].

Islamic higher education has played an important role in nurturing individuals by constructing a deep knowledge and understanding of the Islamic faith, its principles, and its application in society [1]. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have taken significant steps towards environmental conservation motivated by Sufi values and doctrines [2]. Islamic boarding schools have a significant influence on the formation of student character in Indonesia [3].

Mosques and their curriculum have played a critical role in the development of education and science education in the Islamic world [4]. Religious moderation based on theological values is studied in Islamic boarding schools in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia [5]. The spiritual leadership role of KH. Moh. Hafidh Sibawayhie in educational innovation at Nurul Wafa Demung Besuki Situbondo Islamic Boarding School is studied [6]. Parents have an important role in sexuality education for children, according to Islamic and scientific resources [7]. Learning innovation through biopreneurship is implemented in Islamic boarding schools to increase interest in entrepreneurship [8].

Incorporating philosophical frameworks within the Islamic educational curriculum can encourage students to engage in critical thinking, questioning, and reflection, which are essential for personal growth and adaptability in modern society. The search results provide examples of studies that have developed integrated curriculum frameworks for political science [9], identified factors affecting critical and holistic thinking in Islamic education in Indonesia [10], and explored the use of basic counseling skills in individual counseling sessions by counseling guidance students [11]. Other studies have described the philosophical, sociological, and psychological frameworks functional in curriculum engineering of the educational system in society [12], reviewed the barriers in teaching critical thinking in Islamic education [13], and investigated the effect of using the cooperative learning strategy on developing critical thinking among second-grade students in the intermediate school in Islamic education [14]. Additionally, some studies have explored the application of contextual teaching principles in Islamic education [15], [16]. These studies suggest that incorporating philosophical frameworks within the Islamic educational curriculum can enhance students' critical thinking skills and promote personal growth [17]. This research embarks on a journey to investigate the implementation of philosophical frameworks in Islamic education within the context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, with a particular focus on their efficacy in fostering critical thinking skills among students [18]–[20].

Islamic education in Indonesia, as in many Muslim-majority countries, has traditionally emphasized rote learning, memorization of religious texts, and adherence to established dogmas [21]. While these practices have their merits, they may not adequately equip students with the skills needed to navigate contemporary challenges, think critically, and engage in constructive dialogue. Recognizing this, a shift toward a more progressive and inclusive form of Islamic education has been gaining momentum [22].

One of the avenues for this shift has been the integration of philosophical frameworks into the curriculum. These frameworks, inspired by the rich heritage of Islamic philosophy, encourage students to explore and engage with complex theological and ethical questions. By encouraging questioning and dialogue, this approach not only deepens students' understanding of their faith but also prepares them for a world where intellectual flexibility and adaptability are highly valued. This research is motivated by the need to evaluate the practical implications and effectiveness of incorporating philosophical frameworks into Islamic education in the Indonesian context. Despite the theoretical underpinnings of this approach, it remains essential to understand how it operates in practice, the extent to which it enhances critical thinking skills, and the associated challenges and opportunities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditional Islamic Education in Indonesia

Historically, Islamic education in Indonesia has centered on religious studies, Quranic recitation, and the mastery of classical Islamic texts. While this approach has produced generations of faithful Muslims, it has often been criticized for its lack of emphasis on critical thinking [23]. Traditional pesantren have adhered to a highly structured curriculum that places a strong emphasis on the rote memorization of religious texts and dogma. This method of instruction, while maintaining religious traditions, has not fully prepared students to engage critically with the complex issues and global challenges of the modern world [24]–[28].

2.2 Philosophical Frameworks in Islamic Education

Philosophical frameworks offer an alternative approach to Islamic education. They encourage students to think critically, question, and engage in constructive dialogue. Philosophical inquiry within an Islamic context seeks to stimulate intellectual curiosity while adhering to the Islamic ethos [29]. The integration of philosophical frameworks in Islamic education has gained prominence in various regions, with scholars and educators recognizing its potential to harmonize tradition with modernity [9], [30].

Islamic philosophy, with its rich history dating back to the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, offers a robust framework for critical thinking within the Islamic context [31]. Thinkers like Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes made significant contributions to various fields, including ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology [32]. These historical philosophical foundations provide an essential backdrop for contemporary philosophical exploration within Islamic education [33]–[35].

The infusion of philosophical inquiry into Islamic education aims to foster critical thinking among students. Critical thinking encompasses the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information and ideas, enabling students to engage in meaningful discourse and make well-informed decisions. By encouraging open dialogue, questioning, and reflection, philosophical frameworks can enhance students' analytical and problem-solving skills, attributes highly sought after in the modern world [36]–[38].

2.3 Gaps in the Literature

While existing research offers valuable insights, there are several gaps that this study seeks to address:

Most existing studies on philosophical frameworks in Islamic education focus on broader concepts. This study aims to investigate the specific implementation and impact of philosophical frameworks in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, considering the unique cultural and religious context. Many studies predominantly focus on student outcomes. This research will include the perspectives of educators and administrators to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing philosophical frameworks. The study will explore the implications of its findings for educational policy in Indonesia, aiming to provide recommendations for curriculum development and reform.

3. METHODS

This study utilized a mixed methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design allows for a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the philosophical framework and its impact on critical thinking in the context of Islamic education. This research uses an exploratory research approach to gain insight into the effectiveness of the philosophical framework in fostering critical thinking skills among santri in Indonesia. This research seeks to understand the underlying factors and mechanisms at play.

3.1 Data Collection

This research design combines primary and secondary data collection methods:

Quantitative data were collected through a survey distributed to students in selected pesantren. The survey included Likert-scale questions to assess students' perceived improvement in critical thinking ability after exposure to the philosophical framework.

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and administrators from the same schools. These interviews will provide deep insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the implementation of the philosophical framework.

Observations were conducted in classrooms and during specific activities where the philosophical framework was implemented. These observations provide valuable context and a better understanding of the implementation process.

Participants

A stratified purposive sampling method was used to select participants, to ensure representation from different regions and demographics. The following categories of participants were considered:

1. Students: Students from various pesantren in Indonesia, representing different age groups and education levels.
2. Teachers: Educators responsible for delivering the educational content, including the philosophical framework, to the students.
3. Administrators: School administrators and decision-makers involved in curriculum design and policy implementation.

The sample size was determined based on the student population of a particular school and their willingness to participate. A minimum of 200 students, 20 teachers and 10 administrators will be targeted for interviews, surveys and observations. However, the sample size can be adjusted during the research process if data saturation is reached, finally the sample of this study is 180 students, 10 teachers and 5 administrators.

3.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey will be analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 26. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, will be used to summarize and present the data.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations are analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves identifying and categorizing recurring themes and patterns in the data. NVivo or similar qualitative data analysis software will be used to assist in coding and organizing the data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Integration of Philosophical Frameworks

This study assessed the extent to which the philosophical framework is integrated into the pesantren curriculum in Indonesia. The quantitative data collected through the survey showed that the average score of integration was 3.78, as measured by a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Integrated) to 5 (Fully Integrated). This score indicates a moderate level of integration of the

philosophical framework into the curriculum. However, there is considerable variation in the level of integration among institutions.

The moderate level of integration of philosophical frameworks is an encouraging sign that many pesantren are embracing the concept of integrating traditional religious education with critical thinking. The variation in the level of integration highlights the diversity in educational practices among different institutions. It is important to explore qualitative data to understand the factors that influence the level of integration and how it manifests in practice.

4.2 Student Perceptions of Critical Thinking Development

To assess students' perceived improvement in critical thinking skills resulting from their exposure to philosophical frameworks, they were surveyed. The average score for perceived improvement in critical thinking skills based on survey responses was 4.21, measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (No Improvement) to 5 (Significant improvement). This high score indicates that students generally believe that their critical thinking skills have improved as a result of their exposure to the philosophical framework.

The high average score for perceived improvement in critical thinking ability reflects the value that students place on philosophical discussions and critical thinking activities in their educational experiences. The data showed a strong positive correlation between the integration of philosophical frameworks and students' perceived improvement in critical thinking ability.

Interviews with students further underscored these quantitative findings. Students described their experiences with philosophical discussions as intellectually stimulating and enriching. One student said, *"These discussions make us think more deeply about our faith and its relevance in the modern world. It's like a mental exercise that sharpens our critical thinking skills."*

4.3 Qualitative Findings

Semi-structured interviews with students provided deeper insights into their experiences with the application of the philosophical framework. The students expressed their enthusiasm for the interactive nature of the activity, which encouraged them to articulate and defend their viewpoints. One student shared, *"I used to just memorize religious texts, but now I am encouraged to question and discuss them. This has improved my ability to analyze and debate."*

The teachers recognized the potential of philosophical frameworks in improving critical thinking skills. They mentioned that students who engaged in philosophical discussions showed increased curiosity and willingness to question traditional interpretations. However, teachers also highlighted the need for additional training and resources to effectively incorporate philosophical frameworks into the curriculum.

Administrators expressed their support for the integration of philosophical frameworks, emphasizing the importance of a holistic educational experience. They recognized the role of philosophical discussions in encouraging open-mindedness and enhancing students' adaptability. Administrators also recognized the need for further professional development for teachers and collaborative efforts to ensure the sustainability of this approach.

The qualitative data aligned with the quantitative findings, which showed the positive impact of the philosophical framework on students' critical thinking skills. Students' experiences and perceptions further validated the importance of critical thinking activities in Islamic education.

Teachers and administrators acknowledged the potential of the framework but also highlighted the need for additional resources and teacher training to optimize its implementation.

4.4 Challenges and Opportunities

The findings highlight some important points regarding the integration of philosophical frameworks in Islamic education:

Challenges

Many schools mentioned limited resources, including the availability of trained educators and materials related to philosophical frameworks. The need to adapt philosophical discussions to the cultural and religious context of the students was recognized as a challenge. Achieving a balance between tradition and modernity in the curriculum remains a complex endeavor. Educators expressed the need for specialized training to effectively incorporate philosophical frameworks into their teaching methods.

Opportunities

This study shows that the integration of philosophical frameworks encourages critical thinking among students. This is a significant opportunity for educational improvement. The development of critical thinking skills through philosophical inquiry aligns with the goal of preparing students for global engagement, enabling them to address international issues and challenges with a more informed perspective. These findings emphasize the potential benefits of integrating philosophical frameworks into the broader educational landscape. Policymakers can consider ways to support this integration and provide resources for training and curriculum development.

The challenges identified in this study, including limited resources, cultural sensitivity and the need for teacher training, provide insights into areas that require attention to optimize the integration of philosophical frameworks. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring the continued success of this approach.

The opportunities presented by the promotion of critical thinking and the development of global competencies are significant. These findings suggest that the integration of philosophical frameworks is aligned with broader educational goals and can contribute to the development of well-rounded and adaptable students.

5. CONCLUSION

Quantitative results demonstrated a moderate level of integration of philosophical frameworks into the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools. Students' perceived improvements in critical thinking skills strongly affirmed the value of philosophical discussions and critical thinking activities in their educational experience. Qualitative findings echoed these results, showcasing the enthusiasm of students and the recognition of the potential by educators and administrators. The challenges identified, including resource constraints and the need for cultural adaptation and teacher training, are acknowledged as important areas for further development.

Nevertheless, the opportunities, such as the promotion of critical thinking and global competence, are compelling reasons to continue exploring the integration of philosophical frameworks into Islamic education. This research encourages educators, administrators, and

policymakers to consider the potential benefits of blending tradition with modernity, fostering a generation of students who are not only deeply rooted in their faith but also equipped with the critical thinking skills essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. As Indonesia and the world continue to evolve, the integration of philosophical frameworks in Islamic education provides a valuable pathway toward holistic, adaptable, and globally competent individuals who are well-prepared to face the challenges of the future.

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