Minds Illumination: Exploring Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) in the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum

Pencerahan Minda: Meneroka Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi (KBAT) di dalam Kurikulum Bersepadu Tahfiz

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has strategically implemented the concept of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) to improve students' abilities in addressing the increasing global competition. This initiative extends beyond the national subjects outlined in the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) and seamlessly integrates with the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT). This article explores the intricate dynamics of HOTs within Malaysia's educational landscape, as outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025. A critical examination of issues arising from the integration of HOTs in KBT is essential to understanding its effectiveness. This study conducted a comprehensive analysis using a research design that employed literature search techniques, with findings subjected to deductive analysis. Although there is an increasing emphasis on Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTs), research on their integration into the Hifz al-Quran subject within KBT is limited. This gap restricts the understanding of their implications. The adoption of HOTs from Revised Bloom's Taxonomy has sparked debates regarding the relevance of advanced cognitive skills, particularly in the context of Hifz al-Quran within KBT. Previous studies have identified and categorised challenges related to implementing HOTs in KBT, highlighting three main categories. These classifications contribute valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of issues confronted during the integration of HOTs into the KBT, paving the way for targeted improvements in educational strategies and outcomes.

Keywords: HOTs; thinking skill; MOE; tahfiz integrated curriculum; Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

ABSTRAK

Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM) dengan strategiknya memperkenalkan konsep Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi (KBAT) untuk meningkatkan keupayaan pelajar menghadapi persaingan global yang semakin meningkat. Inisiatif ini juga diguna pakai di dalam mata pelajaran kebangsaan yang termaktub dalam Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) dan seterusnya digunakan juga dalam Kurikulum Bersepadu Tahfiz (KBT). Artikel ini mengkaji secara mendalam dinamika KBAT dalam landskap pendidikan Malaysia, sebagaimana yang diperincikan dalam Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013-2025. Penerokaan kritis terhadap isu-isu yang timbul daripada pengintegrasian KBAT dalam KBT adalah penting untuk memahami keberkesanannya. Dalam menjalankan analisis menyeluruh, kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan dengan teknik carian literatur, dengan dapatan dianalisis secara deduktif. Penggunaan elemen KBAT dalam pengajaran semakin meningkat, tetapi penyelidikan yang mengkaji pengintegrasian KBAT ke dalam mata pelajaran Hifz al-Quran dalam KBT masih terhad, justeru mengurangkan pemahaman terhadap kesan aplikasinya. Penerimaan KBAT dari Kerangka Taksonomi Semakan Bloom telah menimbulkan perdebatan mengenai kerelevanan kemahiran kognitif tinggi, khususnya dalam konteks Hifz al-Quran dalam KBT. Kajian terdahulu telah mengenal pasti dan mengategorikan cabaran-cabaran yang berkaitan dengan pelaksanaan KBAT dalam KBT, dan membahagikan cabaran tersebut kepada tiga kategori utama yang berbeza. Klasifikasi ini memberikan input

terhadap isu atau cabaran yang wujud semasa pengintegrasian KBAT ke dalam KBT, seterusnya membuka ruang untuk menambahbaik strategi pendidikan dan pencapaian.

Kata kunci: KBAT; kemahiran berfikir; KPM; kurikulum bersepadu tahfiz; Taksonomi Semakan Bloom

INTRODUCTION

The educational system in Malaysia is a crucial domain that undergoes frequent modifications in terms of implementation and curriculum to enhance the academic proficiency of students in primary and secondary schools. Since 2014, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has initiated the implementation of PAK21, which stands for 21st Century Learning, as a means to transform education by emphasizing the mastery of skills relevant to the 21st century (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014). The Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 places significant emphasis on PAK21, with the aim of fostering the development of proficient and competent students. The PPPM 2013-2025 highlights six distinct aspirations that are deemed essential for every student to attain, with one of these being the development of thinking skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2013).

The Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (KBKK) were incorporated into the Primary Schools Integrated Curriculum (KBSR) and the Secondary Schools Integrated Curriculum (KBSM) in 1994, as part of the national curriculum. In 2011, the national curriculum went through a significant improvement through the implementation of the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) and the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM). This initiative aimed to enhance students' overall thinking abilities. The ongoing transformation of education within the school system is evidenced by the development of the PPPM 2013-2025, which places significant emphasis on the cultivation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs). This strategic approach is intended to equip students with the necessary competencies to effectively navigate the highly competitive global landscape (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014). Similar situations have also occurred in other countries, such as Singapore. The emphasis on fostering critical thinking in Singaporean schools is not a novel concept, it has experienced a resurgence of interest in recent times. This renewed emphasis is demonstrated through the government's vision of 'Every Student, A Thinking Student', aiming to cultivate critical thinking skills among all students across educational levels, as outlined in initiatives like the 'Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes' (Tan 2017). The other neighboring country like Indonesia also began to prioritize the development of critical thinking in education to enhance national progress and competitiveness around 2008. This initiative involved sending Indonesian lecturers abroad, where they engaged in educational studies and interacted with foreign academics, fostering discussions on innovative educational approaches like critical thinking. As a result, Indonesian academics became more aware of the importance of critical thinking in education, prompting discussions and critiques about the existing educational system's limitations in promoting critical thinking skills (Ilyas 2017). This essential skill is not only implemented in neighboring countries but also in many countries around the world, including the USA, India, UK, Australia, and Finland (Ab Kadir 2018; Glevey 2008; Horn & Veermans 2019; Murawski 2014; Reddy & Nehru 2021).

The evolution of education in Malaysia encompasses not only the national education system, but also the burgeoning presence of tahfiz education. The MOE has acknowledged this trend and has gradually integrated tahfiz education into the secondary school level of the national education system. As such, the MOE has taken steps to address the importance of offering high-quality religious and tahfiz education that is grounded in robust Islamic principles. To this end, the MOE has introduced the Dini Integrated Curriculum (KBD) and Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) as part of the national curriculum under the framework of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 (Norazman 2020; Islamic Education Division 2015a, 2015b; Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014).

The critical thinking framework, which forms the crux of intellectual development, is grounded in a multidisciplinary foundation, synthesizing insights from various academic realms. This amalgamation is particularly evident in disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and education, where the conceptualization and interpretation of critical thinking diverge. Noteworthy is the alignment of the educational perspective on critical thinking with the elucidation provided in Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, specifically focusing on information processing skills (Altun & Yildirim

2023). In tandem with this intellectual paradigm, the MOE has strategically incorporated the introduction of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) into the current curriculum. This assimilation adheres to the meticulously structured framework of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Within this framework, each facet of HOTs is methodically translated through verbs meticulously specified within the three principal domains encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor thinking levels. This deliberate integration signifies a concerted effort to cultivate a comprehensive educational experience that nurtures advanced cognitive skills aligned with contemporary pedagogical standards (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014; Nafiati 2021).

Documents analysis conducted on the Hifz al-Quran subject within the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) revealed that Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) are effectively integrated into classroom teaching and learning processes, as outlined in the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP) (Mohd Saad et al. 2023). The analysis found out that in Quranic verses memorization activities, action verbs such as 'menghafaz' (memorizing) and 'mempamer' (presenting) align with cognitive domains C1 (remembering) and C3 (presenting or demonstrating), while also exhibiting similarities with affective domain A5 (Valuing) verbs like 'menunjukkan' (showing) or 'membuktikan' (proving). Although the process of memorizing the Quranic verses falls within the cognitive domains C1 and C3, it is not a singular action; instead, it needs to be carried out concurrently with actions like 'mempamer' or 'membentang,' such as reciting in front of a teacher. This process enables students to achieve proficiency in the affective (A5) and psychomotor (P2) domains. In order to achieve HOTs implementation in tahfiz education, it necessitates a high level of commitment from teachers, who play a pivotal role in ensuring its effectiveness. Teachers who adeptly interlink the subject matter with various skills not only motivate students but also facilitate the development of the knowledge they acquire (Dilekli & Tezci 2016; al-Ghazālī 2005). Furthermore, successful teachers who instill critical thinking in their instructional methods can enhance cognitive maturity in students, as advocated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) guidelines (Mohd Zhaffar et al. 2022).

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The integration of tahfiz curriculum with existing subjects in KSSM, known as KBT, has established four significant objectives. One of these objectives is centered on the development of human capital that possesses the capacity to offer insights in problem-solving, enhance their thinking ability, and foster creative and innovative thinking (Islamic Education Division 2015b). The objective articulated by KBT entails the production of proficient human resources and the optimization of cognitive capacity. It is evident that the acquisition of advanced cognitive abilities, specifically in the realm of sentence-level thinking, is imperative for huffaz to excel in their field. This entails optimizing their cognitive capacity for analytical and critical thinking. As per the Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster n.d.-b), the term "maximum" can be delineated as 'the period of highest, greatest, or utmost development'. The term "ability" is defined as 'the quality or state of being able' and 'competence in doing something: SKILL' (Merriam-Webster n.d.-a). In the present context, it can be inferred that students of tahfiz are expected to attain the highest level of thinking skills in order to demonstrate their ability. Consequently, it is imperative to implement Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) in the tahfiz education system as a means of achieving the goal of producing proficient human resources in the form of Quranic huffaz.

Besides that, in the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP) of Hifz al-Quran, the subject that related to Quranic memorization has stated that HOTs was one of the important 21st Century Learning skills that must be acquired by students (Curriculum Development Division 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019c, 2019a). Therefore, it is important for the teachers to implement HOTs in the teaching of Hifz al-Quran as per mentioned in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 to empower Malaysian student with the 21st Century Learning skills. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) background while examining the challenges inherent in incorporating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) within the KBT framework. Firstly, it will delve into the past development and contextual framework of KBT, explaining its origins,

evolution, and underlying principles. Following that, it will examine the challenges and barriers involved in integrating HOTs into KBT, shedding light on the various issues and their effects on educational practices and results. Therefore, research questions are: how does the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) framework impact the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) among teachers and students? and what are the challenges and barriers encountered in this process within educational practices and outcomes?

METHODS

This article presented research design of literature search regarding the brief background of Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs). Firstly, the research questions were developed from the PICo framework (Stern et al. 2014), which encompasses Population (teachers and students), Interest (Higher Order Thinking Skills), and Context (Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum - KBT), are designed to facilitate a focused exploration within educational contexts. The collection of data and information was meticulously executed, employing a filtering process centered around keywords of 'HOTs' and 'KBT', ensuring a targeted and focused approach. This methodological precision was integral in capturing relevant literature that directly pertained to the intersection of HOTs and the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum. The subsequent phase involved a rigorous analysis of the acquired results through deductive analysis (Pandey 2019). This analytical approach illuminated the intricacies of challenges and issues entwined with the integration of HOTs and KBT. The identified challenges and issues were judiciously categorized into three distinct classifications, offering a systematic breakdown that enhances the comprehension of multifaceted obstacles encountered during the implementation of HOTs in KBT.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

CONCEPT OF HOTs IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

The KSSM was developed in response to the Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025, with the aim of aligning the quality of secondary school curricula with global benchmarks. The KSSM has incorporated the international standard-based curriculum by creating the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP) for all subjects, which includes Content Standards, Learning Standards, and Performance Standards. The finalized DSKP has incorporated six fundamental pillars of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM). These pillars aim to seamlessly integrate knowledge, skills, and values while also explicitly encompassing 21st Century Skills and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs). The process of integration is undertaken with the aim of fostering a well-rounded individual who possesses intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical balance, in accordance with the National Education Philosophy. Consequently, the successful execution of KSSM requires teachers to prioritize the integration of HOTs in their pedagogical approach, thereby enabling students to acquire the essential competencies required in the contemporary era (Muhammad Talhah & Ahmad Marzuki 2020; Curriculum Development Division 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Ministry of Education Malaysia 2013; Rajikal & Hamzah 2020).

The Ministry of Education's implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) is intended to address the growing global competition in modern times. The execution of HOTs encompasses a total of seven elements, which are comprised of three main elements: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The four remaining supporting elements comprise co-curricular activities, community and private support, build efforts, and resources (Figure 1) (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014; Wan Abdullah et al. 2020).
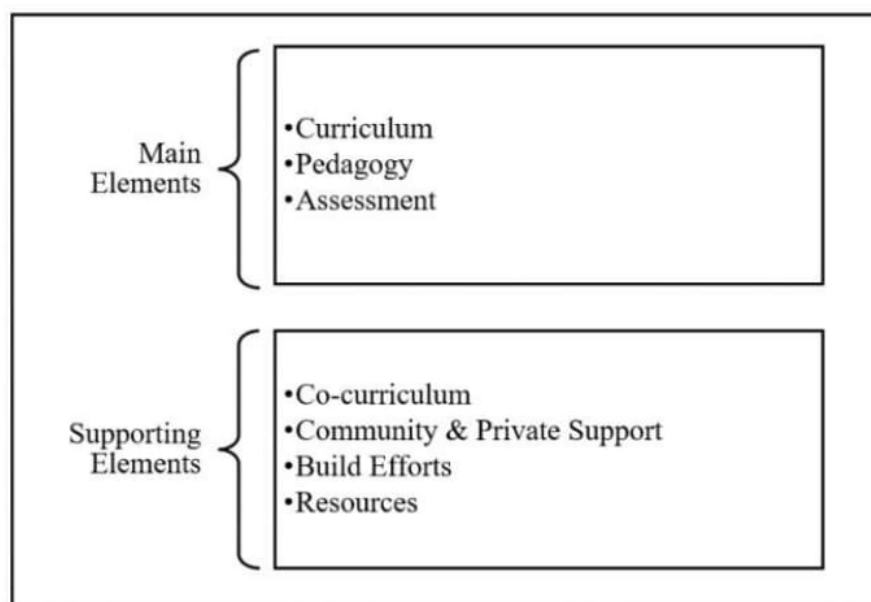
FIGURE 1. Seven Elements of HOTs Culture in the Malaysian School System (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014)

The concept of thinking skills formulated by the MOE has been adapted from the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, which is illustrated in the following figure (Figure 2) (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001).

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy categorizes education into three primary domains, namely the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Nafiati 2021). With reference to the hierarchy depicted in Figure 2, the three domains have been categorized into six distinct orders of cognitive processing, namely creating, evaluating, analyzing, applying, understanding and memorizing. The Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) category encompasses the top four orders, namely creating, evaluating, analyzing, and applying. Conversely, the Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTs) category comprises understanding and memorizing. The taxonomy was revised to suit the contemporary world, with a particular emphasis on three domains: curriculum development, pedagogical approaches, and assessment. Additionally, changes were made to the terminology, whereby operational keywords were utilized to transform nouns into verbs, thereby creating measurable objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001; Muhammad Talhah & Ahmad Marzuki 2020; Nafiati 2021; Wan Abdullah et al. 2020).
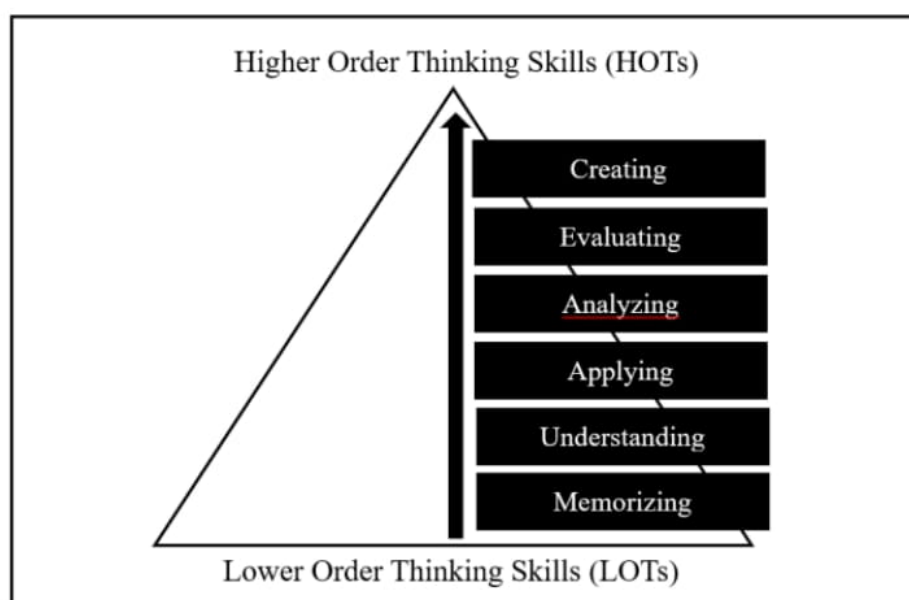

FIGURE 2. Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001; Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014)

Theoretically, the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy is an objective classification of learning in education determined by teachers to students. It is specifically designed for developing learning objectives, teaching and assessment among these main components of an educational system. This taxonomy is also useful in determining classifications for standards. In addition, this taxonomy is widely used in the world as far as Asian countries (Amer 2006; Kocakaya & Kotluk 2016). However, the rapid changes that have taken place outside and within the country have raised questions about the relevance of the use of this taxonomy in the education curriculum in Malaysia as this taxonomy also has a side of problems and has received criticism from various parties (Amer 2006; Beetham & Sharpe 2013; Marzano & Kendall 2007; Masrom et al. 2018; Shukran & Nor Faridah 2017; Soozandehfar & Adeli 2016; Tutkun et al. 2012).

HOTs IN TAHFIZ INTEGRATED CURRICULUM (KBT)

Higher-order thinking skills (HOTs) are not limited to Science and Mathematics disciplines, but are also integrated across all subjects, including those in the KBT curriculum. The aim is to cultivate individuals who possess not only rote memorization abilities, but also a deep understanding of the subject matter, and the capacity to apply critical thinking skills at an advanced level. This is achieved through mastery of skills such as application, analysis, creation, and evaluation, which enable students to apply the teachings of the Quran in their daily lives. The Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) outlines the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP) for Hifz al-Quran subjects, which specifies the thinking skills required for students to attain. These skills are consistent with those adopted in KSSR and KSSM (Curriculum Development Division 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019a, 2019b).

The Hifz al-Quran subjects offered at KBT are designed to emphasise the memorization activities of students. The students are provided with two sets of textbooks, specifically Quranic manuscript and Quranic translation, along with a workbook that serves as a log for memorization activities. The syllabus for Hifz al-Quran commences from Form 1 and continues until Form 5. The memorization requirements for each level have been established and must be fulfilled in order to successfully complete the memorization process. Table 1 presents a comprehensive division of the Hifz al-Quran memorization as outlined in KBT (Curriculum Development Division 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Islamic Education Division 2015b; Norazman 2020):

TABLE 1. Juz' Division of the Quranic Memorization Syllabus by KBT

Form	Juz'
1	30,1,2,3,4,5
2	6,7,8,9,10,11,12
3	13,14,15,16,17,18
4	19,20,21,22,23,24,25
5	26,27,28,29

The notion of HOTs, which is encompassed within KBT, has been derived from Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Curriculum Development Division 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019a, 2019b) and adheres to the same cognitive hierarchy delineated in the aforementioned taxonomy. However, past research studies have identified issues pertaining to KBT and the taxonomy concept, as documented by the Islamic Education Division (2021), Masrom et al. (2018), and Wan Abdullah et al. (2020). The primary concerns expressed by the authoritative figures in KBT pertain to the necessity of incorporating the Quranic tahfiz curriculum within the framework of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

The present issue pertains to the discipline of Hifz al-Quran, wherein the level of thinking is observed to be inadequate owing to the prevalent notion of thinking that is predominantly centred around the act of remembering in the field of tahfiz. This issue can be further categorised into three distinct areas of focus. The second point of emphasis pertains to the fundamental framework that has been adopted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) itself. As a result, all curricula within the Malaysian education system are subject to this framework. The third aspect pertains to the necessity of devising an appropriate cognitive framework that is grounded in the Quranic texts and hadiths, which can serve as a basis for developing a

tailored curriculum for the domain of Quranic tahfiz (Masrom et al. 2018; Wan Abdullah et al. 2020).

According to Mohd Saad et al. (2020), memorization of the Quran is difficult and requires intense concentration. Those who have memorized the Quran must also comprehend it, retain it, and apply it (Hashim et al. 2013). When compared to adaptations from the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, memorization is included in the lower order of thinking, whereas adapting Western thought to conquer the process of memorization of the Quran, which is a manuscript for Muslims, is ambiguous. Additionally, the position of the reasoning order differs in the Quran memorization assessments. The first stage is to understand. Understanding Quranic verses is crucial not only for comprehending the content of the Quran, but also for enhancing students' comprehension and memorization of verses. Here, the connection between two processes is evident: the process of comprehending and the process of remembering. The next stage is application. Once students comprehend and memorize the Quran, it will be simpler for them to apply Quranic knowledge to their daily lives (Abu al-Fida' 2006; Masrom et al. 2018; Mohd Saad et al. 2020). Therefore, the adaptation of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy in the KBT is deemed less accurate to meet the objectives of the KBT, and assessment of the current curriculum must be considered to ensure its efficacy in achieving the goal of producing a balanced huffaz in the world and hereafter (Haron et al. 2019).

IMPLEMENTATION OF HOTs IN KBT: CHALLENGES AND CURRENT ISSUES

The eighth year of KBT implementation has begun, but the challenges and issues of HOTs application in KBT continue to exist and no specific solutions can be implemented. Teachers are primarily responsible for incorporating HOTs into the teaching and learning process. The success of this endeavor is also dependent on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers in their implementation (Mohd. Nasri 2017; Mohd Noor@Jamil et al. 2020; Zulkifli et al. 2022). When teachers use techniques, skills, and pedagogy to help students improve their skills, they aim to improve students' accomplishments in a variety of ways, not just academically (Mohd Ashraf et al. 2020). In addition, teachers must depart from traditional teaching methods and focus on HOTs aspects applicable to students (Driana & Ernawati 2019). Competence in teaching is one of the obstacles teachers confront in the implementation of HOTs

in the classroom (Rifin et al. 2021). The difficulty faced by teachers includes making a difference to each level in student thinking skills and in-depth knowledge about HOTs. Teachers do not attempt to assess students through the HOTs elements due to the limited research related to the appropriate HOTs teaching practice, as well as the management of schools who are unable to implement HOTs, which is also a cause of school achievement regression (Rifin et al. 2021). Attention must be paid to the teaching and learning system of tahfiz institutions to ensure that the tahfiz education system in Malaysia is of the highest quality. This article elaborates on the difficulties and most recent issues of HOTs implementation in the KBT, which are divided into three categories: issues from teachers, students, and teaching aid materials.

HOTs CHALLENGING AMONG TEACHERS

Several issues have been identified concerning the concept of implementing HOTs in tahfiz institutions. However, there are few specific studies on the application or implementation of HOTs in KBT that emphasize on the subject of Quranic memorization, namely Hifz al-Quran. However, related issues still exist such as lack of skills and readiness in applying HOTs, lack of pedagogical skills, and lack of mastery of lesson content (Mohd Zhaffar et al. 2020). According to the report on the application of HOTs in teaching and learning for the Diniah Integrated Curriculum (KBD) and Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) (Islamic Education Division 2021), tahfiz teachers who struggle to apply HOTs are less exposed to questioning techniques that stimulate students' critical thinking. In addition, there are tahfiz teachers who engage in analyzing, evaluating, and creating activities, but who are unaware that these are HOTs processes (Wan Abdullah et al. 2020).

Through curriculum such as Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (KBKK) implemented in schools in 1994, thinking-skills-based pedagogy has been utilized for decades. As recommended by PPPM (2013-2025) (Curriculum Development Division, 2014), this program was sustained and strengthened with the introduction of HOTs. Teachers can improve their pedagogical abilities through exposure to courses, training, seminars, and professional learning communities. There are tahfiz teachers who state that they lack appropriate pedagogical exposure for HOTs application and

that their teaching techniques are more traditional (Haron et al. 2019; Hashim et al. 2013). Furthermore, teachers do not know the method of applying HOTs elements and are less aware of the significance of HOTs for tahfiz students in Hifz al-Quran subjects (Islamic Education Division 2021; Wan Abdullah et al. 2020). There are also past studies on the level of knowledge and skills of tahfiz teachers on HOTs applications that display different results of studies, which is the level of knowledge and skills of tahfiz teachers in Perak, Kedah, and Perlis is at a high level (Mohd Noor@Jamil et al. 2020). This demonstrates that the study's results are inconsistent and paves the way for further research on HOTs in Hifz al-Quran subjects.

Since Arabic is the medium of instruction for Hifz al-Quran subjects (Norazman 2020), tahfiz teachers must also be fluent in Arabic to streamline the teaching process and motivate the students to memorize the Quran (Nordin et al. 2023). This is one of the qualities that should be possessed by the teachers (Mustapa & Arifin 2015). However, there are some teachers who recognize their inability to use Arabic and pose a challenge to the implementation of HOTs during the instructional process. Therefore, it is difficult for the teacher to stimulate the student's reasoning and conduct a one-way teaching session (Islamic Education Division 2021; Mohd Zhaffar et al. 2020; Wan Abdullah et al. 2020; Zakaria & Ismail 2022).

Moreover, there have been instances where teachers recruited by tahfiz institutions lack qualifications in tahfiz education and possess limited knowledge of tahfiz pedagogy (Siti Rashidah 2020), making it challenging for them to integrate Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) into the teaching and learning processes.

HOTs CHALLENGING AMONG STUDENTS

The mastery of the concept of critical thinking among tahfiz students is still inadequate, particularly in terms of analytical and logical constructions (Hashim et al. 2021). This is also due to the fact that traditional teaching methods are less likely to provide students with critical thinking experience. In addition to conceptual comprehension, the learning process requires the ability to analyze, evaluate, and employ knowledge. In addition, critical and creative teaching methods can aid in the development of students' noble character (Hashim et al. 2021; Nor et al. 2015). The students' command of Arabic was

also inadequate, and the instructor's instructional approach was unresponsive; consequently, the teacher had to translate the words for the students to comprehend the content of the textbooks. Due to the problem of Arabic proficiency, it is difficult for instructors to stimulate students' higher-level thought processes (Islamic Education Division 2021).

HOTs ISSUE REGARDING TEACHING AIDS

The lack of bound materials or modules within the KBT framework that address the implementation methodology and HOTs in tahfiz education poses a challenge for educators seeking sources of guidance and reference (Norazman 2020; Islamic Education Division 2015a, 2021). The Examination Board under the Ministry of Education Malaysia has made available the HOTs Assessment Sample document on its website for various academic fields, with the exception of religious education and tahfiz-related fields (Examination Board 2015). The document entitled 'Toolkit PdP KBAT 2020' contains a range of resources including information, activities, videos on HOTs strategies, assessment items, reference books for HOTs stimuli, and references to the i-THINK programme. However, it is noteworthy that there is a lack of information or HOTs activities available for subjects falling under the KBT curriculum, as per the Curriculum Development Division (2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) established by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) is the most effective attempt to restructure the tahfiz education system in Malaysia. KBT, which aspires to produce professionals huffaz with 21st Century Learning skills (PAK21), has reintroduced tahfiz education into Malaysia's mainstream curriculum. In addition, it is anticipated that tahfiz students' knowledge of the Quran and national academia will contribute to the community in their capacity as professional scholars. This is also stated in the mission of KBT, which is to produce role models who can recite and comprehend the verses of the Quran. In order to attain this purpose, the application of HOTs elements in the process of teaching and learning of Hifz al-Quran should be equipped with suitable modules that provide teachers with guidance and references for implementing HOTs. Implementation of HOTs aspects in the

classroom will be successful if tahfiz teachers have the information, understanding, readiness, and skills necessary to apply HOTs. Therefore, for future recommendation of these issues, it is recommended to build a suitable HOTs module for tahfiz education, as a guidance and support for tahfiz teacher.

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