Postmodernism Challenges for Muslim Schools and Universities in Malaysia: The Role of Artificial Intelligence Pedagogical Integration into Islamic Education

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Abstract

In today's rapidly changing world, postmodern civilization often undermines traditional religious values and contributes to socio-economic inequality. The intersection of Islamic philosophy and secular education creates tension, as Islamic teachings on justice, equality, and religious principles frequently clash with Western secular values, leading to issues such as Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) and over-capitalism. Schools and universities face challenges which isolate them or hinder their academic performance. This study used a qualitative research methodology grounded in the researcher's nearly 20 years of teaching experience at private universities in Malaysia. The research was well-versed by direct classroom engagement, a mentoring program, and involvement in academic events administration, offering deep insights into student challenges and enriching data collection. A critical, reflexive approach was adopted to address potential biases, and results were verified through member-checking and triangulation. The study is structured into four sections: methodology, challenges in Malaysia's education system, the incorporation of Quranic metaphysics in tertiary education, and the application of interactive AI-pedagogy technologies. Using Malaysia as a case study, the research offers practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and students in addressing the postmodern and post-pandemic challenges by Muslim society. It is worth noting that the study is specifically focused on Muslim education in Malaysia. Therefore, its findings may not be generalizable to other Muslim countries or societies. Nevertheless, it is expected to provide a profound perspective in bridging the gap between Islamic principles and secular educational practices in Muslim pedagogical world.

Keywords: Muslim education, postmodernism, AI Islamic educational tools, Malaysia

Introduction

Islamic education is a core curriculum for Muslim children in Malaysia, aligning with the country's official religion as stated in the Constitution. The aim of Islamic learning for Muslim students is to instill relevant proficiency, shape, decent akhlaq and cultivate practical thinking skills with wise emotional intelligence. The Islamic education program for Muslims begins as early as preschool and elementary school, with teachers trained to nurture Islamic values through hands-on activities, informal learning and other bonding activities. As students progress to high school, the emphasis on Islamic values continues. However, with the rapidly changing technology and increased access to information through the Internet and big data, it is crucial to reform the Islamic curriculum across preschools, elementary schools, and even tertiary education to effectively integrate the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Devedžić, 2004) and in daily life. As the postmodern era challenges the traditional narrative and institutions like government, economy, religion and the concept of objectivity, it is important to be able to filter and analyze AI, make informed decisions, and behave morally and innovatively without compromising theology. It's important that the Islamic education curriculum be designed in a way that is exciting and relevant for students so they can be attracted to continue practicing Islam. The use of ICT and AI learning must be fully integrated with the traditional approach of seeking knowledge to make lessons more engaging for Muslim students.

Therefore, this study employed a qualitative research methodology grounded in the researchers' extensive teaching and learning experience accumulated over nearly twenty years as lecturers at various private universities across Malaysia. These institutions included the Institute of Technology Tun Abdul Razak (presently known as UNITAR Malaysia), Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT), Management and Science University (MSU) and Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARUC). The researchers' immersion in both

theoretical and practical learning sessions provided a rich foundation for data collection. The methodology was heavily informed by the researchers' experiential learning (Lamb, 2015) or direct engagement in the classroom, where they conducted learning sessions and supervised students from diverse backgrounds through a mentoring program (Pleschová & McAlpine, 2015; Yirci, 2017; Hayes & Pridham, 2019). This program facilitated deep insights into the ongoing challenges students face, which hinder their access to quality Islamic education and academic success. Furthermore, the researchers provided motivational support and counseling to students with special needs, personality disorders, and those who were underperforming, thereby gaining a comprehensive understanding of the varied obstacles students encounter summarized in Table 3 and Table 4.

In addition to classroom interactions, the researchers were actively involved in academic events administration (Bladen & Kennell, 2014). This involvement included organizing and staging student activities related to specific courses or subjects, further enriching the contextual understanding and practical application of the research findings. The researchers' hands-on experience in these roles allowed for a nuanced analysis of the educational landscape, contributing significantly to the study's depth and authenticity.

The researchers maintained transparency about their dual role as both educator and researcher by adopting a critical, reflexive approach throughout the research process to ensure the researchers' biases and perspectives were acknowledged and addressed. The results were further verified through member checking (Candela, 2019; McKim, 2023) and triangulation practice (Blaikie, 1991; Thurmond, 2001; Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo & Gonzalez, 2018) adding new knowledge to the field, and identifying patterns and themes before offering practical recommendations for educators, policy makers and researchers as a means to improving the education quality for Muslims students. The integration of extensive teaching experience and active participation in various educational roles enabled a thorough and enriched exploration of the challenges and opportunities within the Malaysian educational

context. This experiential foundation provided a robust framework (Appendix I) for understanding the intricate dynamics at play in the students' educational experiences, including the efficacy of various pedagogical strategies.

The study is divided into four main sections, beginning with the methodology employed by the researchers. The second section delves into the specific challenges faced by Malaysia's educational system in the face of postmodernism. The third section proposes a solution by incorporating Qur'anic metaphysics in tertiary education, and the fourth section examines the application and interactive yet potential AI pedagogical tools to enhance traditional Islamic values in education. This study is a valuable resource for policy makers, educators, trainers, teachers and students. It provides practical solutions to current challenges in Malaysia's education system, bridging the gap between tradition, principles and modernity. It examines the challenges of postmodernism in Malaysia's education and offers a unique solution by incorporating Islamic pedagogical principles.

Postmodernism Challenges and Malaysia Educational Narratives

Postmodernism is a cultural and intellectual movement that emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a response to modernism, characterized by a culture of fragmentation (Ahmed & Donnan, 2003; Ahmed, 2013) where there is no single dominant cultural narrative or ideology, and society is seen as a collection of diverse and often conflicting perspectives, values and beliefs. Postmodernism critiques the idea of universal truth and questions traditional institutions like government, economy and religion as well as the concept of objectivity and truth. It also impacts the fields of literature, arts, architecture and philosophy, encouraging exploration of new forms, flairs and ideas, hence the rejection of what it sees as the restrictions of modernism. Today, postmodernism philosophy is present in the AI cultural and societal landscape, particularly in social media where manifold speeches in diverse forms are constantly in dialogue. And Muslims, regardless of their nation of origin, are bombarded with big data and the Internet that

bring together positive or destructive philosophies which may be compatible or non-compatible with Islamic ethics.

In short, postmodernism has played a significant role in shaping world civilization in the second half of the twenty-first century and continues to shape it today. It has challenged traditional ways of thinking and understanding and led to greater awareness, and scrutiny of societal power structures as well as representations. Malaysia with a majority of Muslims experiences the massive impact of postmodernism philosophy. Therefore, it is crucial for Muslim teachers and Muslim students to comprehend postmodernism influences on the national society through an educational view. The truth is, the Islamic curriculum used by Muslims worldwide, including in Malaysia, is facing significant challenges due to the influx of artificial intelligence and the proliferation of social media or virtual platforms, which are disrupting traditional educational curriculum offered by schools and institutions.

Islamic education is perceived as a threat to postmodern civilization. It is accused of failing to teach decent ethics, values and ways of life to students in primary and secondary schools as well as universities. As revealed by Aliff, Hamzah and Rahim (2015), the current curriculum places emphasis on grades and certifications rather than on developing moral values, social skills and emotional intelligence. The problems in Malaysian elementary education still need to be solved, where students are required to attend separate academic and Islamic schools in the morning and afternoon, respectively. This segregation challenges teachers in integrating values throughout the curriculum and leads to an overload of subjects and a conservative teaching approach. Malaysia National Education Philosophy is only formally holistic, but in practice is far from effective. The current national curriculum divides the major races in Malaysia by using different languages for instruction across public schools for Malays, Chinese and Indians. This segregation has contributed to ongoing racial tension between the races. In order to achieve the goals of the Malaysia National Education Philosophy, it would be necessary to replace the current system of separate schools for different racial groups with a more inclusive educational curriculum. The

racial disharmony seems to be evident and easily found on social media where hate speech between races is now a cancer and threat to Malaysia's unity. The schools, regardless of being Chinese, Indian or local, are urged to integrate the genuine Malaysian National Education Philosophy (MNEP) instead of applying mainland China-oriented syllabuses or mainland India curricula for the Chinese and Indian generations in Malaysia that were born after World War II.

The idea of MNEP is clear-cut and aims to promote unity through the integration of knowledge that focuses on spiritual, emotional and physical development through the national language. If embraced by all Malaysians, regardless of race, this approach could nurture racial harmony and produce well-rounded individuals who are balanced physically, spiritually and emotionally. Other challenges faced by revert Muslims and Muslim communities, as identified by PERKIM, and the Muslim Youth Organisation (ABIM), along with other scholars (Nagata, 1980; Othman, 2006; Kassim, Abdullah & Baba, 2013; Alwi, Bakar & Subki, 2014) are all-inclusive challenges linked to faith and virtue, government, knowledge, economic development, quality of life, minority ethnic rights, women's rights, cultural and moral integrity, conservation of nature, and extremism from both Muslim or non- Muslim society. Secondly, the Shariah Court and related judicial institutions in Malaysia also face challenges related to maintaining their status and direction, improving their public confidence and internal operations, addressing the influence of interfaith, continuing with the abandoned Malaysian common law project, renewing state laws that are inconsistent with Islamic law, renewing outdated laws, practicing sustainable development, and strengthening environmental laws. Other challenges faced by Muslims in Malaysia include the invasion of Western hegemony, hedonism, the outbreak of AIDS, liberalism, political ethics, Madani society, national unity, and racial behavioral problems. These are long-term ramifications of Malaysia educational segregation since the 1960s.

Nevertheless, global capitalism has partially played a critical role in altering the schools and educational landscape. The philosophy has been accused of threatening traditional culture, spiritual values and

country solidarity. Turner (2002), Bicer (2002), Dunning (2004) and Izberk-Bilgin (2012) reaffirm that the negative consequences of modern life in the West, such as secularism, over-commodification of women, corruption and agnosticism are now disintegrating the world civilization's ethics structure. This leads to the production of individuals who excel in business, athletics and science, but lack inspiration and resources to address the long-term impacts of economic systems on the environment or the spiritual quality of human life. Moreover, secularization has resulted in a disconnection from religious values, leading to individuals engaging in harmful or immoral behaviors, such as homosexuality or adultery. These actions can stem from personal desires, societal pressures, mental health issues, or a lack of understanding about consequences. It's crucial for individuals to educate themselves and make ethical, respectful choices that consider the impact on themselves and others. Recent findings by Gino and Mogilner (2014) have shown that although individuals care about appearing religious or morally upright, they often fail to follow their moral compass, leading to corrupt behavior. This highlights the importance of self-reflection and resisting temptation, rather than succumbing to the allure of rewards gained through cheating. In light of the prevalent dishonesty in society, this writing aims to inspire educators and interventions that successfully reduce unethical behavior. In Table 1, the researchers present thirteen critical Muslim philosophical pedagogies heavily criticized by Western and secular philosophy. The relationship between Islamic and Western secular education can be complex, with many points of disagreement and potential conflict.

However, it is essential to remember that within both types of education systems, there is often a wide range of perspectives, and not all individuals hold the same views on every issue. For instance, while Islamic education may prioritize upholding certain principles of justice and human rights, Western secular education may prioritize national security and the protection of citizens. These conflicting viewpoints can create tension and misunderstandings between individuals and communities with different educational backgrounds. Therefore, it is

essential to approach these differences with an open mind and a willingness to comprehend and respect each other's viewpoints.

Table 1. *Islamic Spiritual Philosophy Versus Secular Principles*

Education Area of Conflict	Islamic Philosophy Vs Secular Principles
War Crimes	Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of justice and the prohibition of killing innocent people, as exemplified in the following verse from the Qur'an: "And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right" (17:33). However, some Western countries are clearly committing war crimes, such as the use of torture and the targeting of civilians, in their military actions. The Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine conflict are apparent examples.
Racism	Islam teaches humankind are equal and that racism is a corrupted personality. Islamic scholars argue that racism goes against Islam's principles of equality and justice. Western secular education generally views racism as a social issue that needs to be addressed and works towards promoting equality and combating prejudice.
Dictatorship	Islam advocates for justice and good governance, and some Islamic scholars argue that dictatorship, that involves a single ruler having absolute power, goes against Islamic principles. Western secular education may view dictatorship as a form of government with negative consequences, however it has nothing to do with religion.
LGBTQ Rights	Most Muslims prohibit homosexuality and view it as criminal. Many Muslim scholars believe that human beings are not born with same-sex attraction but this is a choice against the natural order based on their interpretation of An-Nissa: 16. However, Western secular education generally supports the LGBTQ community and views sexual orientation as a natural, innate part of a person's identity.

Over- Capitalism	Muslim scholars strongly opposed capitalism when taken to an extreme, which can lead to greed and exploitation, which goes against the principles of Islam. Western secular education views capitalism as an economic system and the right of individuals or organizations to hoard public resources. Africa's extreme poverty is a consequence of uncontrolled capitalism practice. The genocide of Palestinians by Israel is is also a consequence of capitalism insatiability and colonialization.
Jihad Concept	Jihad is the biggest misconception according to Western philosophy. However, it refers to a Muslim's struggle to be steadfast in righteousness and observe Allah's order. Jihad can be through personal efforts to overcome one's negative traits and tendencies, or it can involve taking action to defend against injustice and oppression. Muslims at large agree the concept of jihad has been misunderstood and exploited to justify violence and aggression by Western secularists. Decent teachers or scholars should actively promote peaceful interpretations of jihad.
Islamophobia	Islamophobia refers to fear, hatred or prejudice towards Islam and Muslims that can manifest in discrimination, violence and social exclusion. Misinformation about Islam and Muslims, negative media portrayals and Western political agenda promoting Islamophobia are a hindrance to world peace and unity.
Communism	The majority of Islamic scholars view communism as a materialistic and atheistic ideology which is against the Islamic spiritual benchmark. In contrast, Western secular education may view communism as a political philosophy with positive and negative aspects, but not necessarily as incompatible with religion.
Liberalism & Pluralism	Islamic scholars argue that liberalism promotes individualism, rejects the Qur'anic paradigm, and undermines community-oriented values, while Western secular education views liberalism as a political ideology that promotes individual freedom and equality. Similarly, pluralism, which involves embracing multiple viewpoints and belief systems, is seen by Islamic scholars as undermining the monotheistic belief of Islam and is akin to shirk (worshipping others besides Allah SWT). In contrast, Western secular education supports pluralism as a means to foster understanding and respect for diversity.

Atheist & Agnostic	Islamic teachings encourage independent thinking and seeking knowledge but within the boundaries of the sharia. Islamic scholars argue that atheism, which involves enormous questioning and challenging the absolute truth of monotheism, can lead to disbelief and straying from the path of Islam. Western secular education generally values atheist or agnosticism to encourage critical thinking and questioning of traditional beliefs.

Adapted from: Jackson (2003), Tibi (2008), El Ayoubi Gebara (2017) and Rafiq and Khan (2021)

Islam Scholarly Tradition and Pedagogical Perspectives

Muslim and Islamic education tradition was one of the exceptions in the history of world civilization. Its proven domain of innumerable curriculum advancement that led to the European golden era in the past is certainly unmatched. This remarkable Islamic educational system was pioneered by Al-Andalus, a region in modern-day Spain and Portugal which was under Muslim rule from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries. Al-Andalus was extremely cutting-edge and produced many renowned scholars who made central contributions to fields such as theology, philosophy, science and literature. This pedagogical tradition of excellence has been recognized for over 700 years. Al-Andalus is known for its rich cultural heritage and its enduring influence on the development of European and Islamic civilization. Among scholars are Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Al-Ghazali, Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Tufail, Ibn al-Baitar and Ibn al-Khatib, (Al-Rodhan, 2012; Yassine, 2020) where their scientific and clinical works are still widely studied and quoted today. The cultural and intellectual achievements of Al-Andalus continue to be recognized and admired, and they have had a lasting influence on the development of both European and Islamic civilization. Therefore, it is critical to navigate contemporary Islamic education to bring forward the spirit of Al-Andalus's exceptional educational methodology. Henceforth, it is delicate, and by taking precarious and demanding responsibilities, schools, principals and teachers must guide their students to succeed in both curriculum and co-curriculum by acknowledging learners' unique cultural, social and

economic backgrounds. Islamic schools worldwide strive to provide a well-rounded education. Nonetheless, teachers must dare to integrate an Islamic AI learning tool into their traditional teaching methods of memorization, exam-oriented learning, and a conservative learning approach, at least for secondary school learners. Critics (Engkizar, Muliati, Rahman & Alfurqan, 2018) challenge the traditional Muslim classroom to design a compelling learning experience that effectively molds the learners' spiritual and physical characters. However, when it comes to incorporating technology into Islamic education, teachers must dare to learn the students' psychological preferences, nurturing them with Islamic principles and philosophy so that the students will continue to practice Islamic ethics for the rest of their lives. Table 2 shows a triangulation between challenges, constructive strategies, and teachers' wisdoms regularly highlighted during school or university administrative meetings.

Table 2. *Triangulation Between Islamic Education Challenges, Constructive Strategies and Teacher Wisdoms*

Islamic Education Challenges	Constructive Strategy	Teacher Wisdoms
Monotheism centric Al-Qur'an as source of guidance	Teacher-student learning fosters a strong sense of Islamic faith with spiritual grounding	Encourage and remind students to constantly incorporate their lesson/learning into their spiritual daily practices. Thus provide opportunities for them to deepen their appreciation of their faith.
Teacher-text-tradition	Offers guidance, support and Islamic ICT pedagogy tools during learning sessions	Empower students to take an active role in their learning by guiding them to explore beneficial AI education tools for their study or lesson topics.

Certainty, trust, piety, devotion	Instill lifetime values that promote self-integrity and morally responsible learners	Foster a welcoming and inclusive learning environment where all students feel comfortable expressing their views or beliefs.
Schools of Thought (Mazhab) division among ummah	Stimulates a tolerance learning ambience, emphasized on community unity, locality and belonging regardless of nationality	Encourage student-learners to adhere to the SAW genuine teachings by minimizing obsession over Schools of Thought. Get involved in campus programs or activities that are aligned with the Al-Qur'an and SAW legacy.
Revelation, tradition-based knowledge	Provides a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding of religious teachings	Teacher/Ustaz/Ustazah to possess exceptional Akhlaq as teaching benchmark. Steadfast and consistently reliable in providing guidance to students regardless of their social status, background and physical capabilities.
Safeguard self-Tawheed, spiritual value and behavioral conduct	Upholds a balance yet decent Akhlaq personality development mentally and spiritually.	Inspire learners to reflect on self-beliefs and practices; how they connect to their personal lives, to the wider community and to the world.
Instruction, Memorization, Indoctrination Practical Application	Tailor made structured lesson plans/learning modules with guided framework for students	Integrate experiential, problem-based learning methodologies along with critical thinking skills to encourage holistic Akhlaq with problem-solving aptitude. Firmly uphold the Islamic paradigm in schools.

Islamic Eschatology The 5 Pillars of Islam and 6 Pillars of Eman	Encourages learners to uphold the Islamic eschatology and to acknowledge the life of the hereafter	Reassure learners that the hereafter is an absolute truth. Therefore, life in this world should constructively contribute to the ummah globally, as it will determine their state in Barzakh and the afterlife

Adapted from: Hashim (2005), Atwell, Brierley, Dukes, Sawalha and Sharaf (2011), Abdullah (2017) and Sahin (2018) and researcher experiential.

Another challenge for teachers is the use of AI in education. Teachers in the Islamic studies area need to adopt AI tools in their teaching, or else students will need help understanding the material and may become bored quickly during classroom activities. Technology integration should be implemented gradually and fully supported by the school management, for it offers endless opportunities for teachers and students to interact and learn. (Ahmed, Arshad, Mahmood & Akhtar, 2016), piecing out that applying spiritual values is crucial to student learning and development. As a result, Muslim graduates should understand and recognize the importance of spirituality in their university or workplace. Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is a critical factor contributing to study performance. The use of collective intelligence, including IQ, EQ and SQ, in decision-making and thinking processes, can shape a graduate's decent personality. SQ enhances a person's holistic perception and encourages them to think beyond materialism, which can lead them on a spiritual path and help them cope with difficult situations. It encompasses all essential human functions, including the ability to live a valued life with motivation, intentions, emotions and a well-formed personality.

Similarly, the Muslim Boarding Schools (MBS) tradition which are known as madrasahs, are educational institutions that provide both residential and academic programing for students, with a focus on the study of Islam and the development of the whole person, including spiritual, moral and academic growth. According to research by Halik

(2016) and Pasi, Rasyidin and Harahap (2020), effective MBSs offer an integrated curriculum that combines Islamic studies with secular subjects and modern technology, such as artificial intelligence. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of MBSs in producing high-achieving, well-rounded students varies greatly depending on factors such as the specific school, its curriculum and teaching methods, and the individual student. In Malaysia, there are growing concerns about the credibility of many Islamic boarding schools, known as Maahad Tahfiz.

These schools are facing a plethora of challenges, including poor management, outdated teaching methods, and a lack of consistency in co-curricular and academic programs (Yahaya, Rasheed & Selamat, 2018). Unfortunately, many of these institutions fail to meet Islamic and academic benchmarks and prioritize funding over genuine efforts to improve administration, academics, and co-curricular activities. It's crucial to note that not all Maahad Tahfiz schools are like this, but the community should be cautious when choosing an institution and ensure that it is certified and accredited as an Islamic education provider. A benchmark serves as a standard or point of reference against which the performance or quality of the school can be measured. By monitoring government intervention, such as policies, funding, inspections and regulations, it's possible to assess whether the schools are meeting the standards set by the government and whether any issues or concerns are being addressed. This is particularly important because it provides insight into the level of oversight and regulation of these schools, and can help ensure that they are providing a credible Islamic contemporary education.

In comparison with Tahfiz schools in Indonesia, established Pesentran are known to provide a comprehensive and holistic educational approach that combines traditional Islamic teachings with modern subjects such as science, mathematics and social science. They have a team of highly qualified and trained teachers, state-of-the-art facilities and resources, and a curriculum that caters to the needs of students. Additionally, they have a robust system of monitoring and evaluating student progress, as well as extracurricular activities that aid

in the overall development of students. Besides, these schools have a strong reputation for producing accomplished religious leaders, scholars and alumni, which serves as a major attraction for students to enroll in these Muslim boarding schools. Studies by Tan (2014), Herdiansyah, Jokopitoyo and Munir (2016), Daulay and Tobroni (2017) and Isbah (2020) found well-established pesentran focus primarily on their educational mission, rather than on a political agenda, and are committed to religious education sustainability, community involvement, peace-building, conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue, and the empowerment of women. The Indonesian government provides support to these schools, which are overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) or the Ministry of National Education (MONE). These schools are also recognized by the MONE, who provide resources and digital facilities such as computer laboratories to ensure the continued excellence of these institutions.

Nevertheless, Muslim Boarding schools in both Malaysia and Indonesia are facing significant postmodernism challenges in addressing the needs of non-inclusive students, students with disabilities and minority ethnic students. The non-inclusive may refer to students who suffer from identity confusion. The researchers' twenty years of experiential work in four private universities outlines the challenges in Table 3 below:

Table 3. *Issues and Challenges Faced by Non-Inclusive Students, Learners with Disabilities and Minority Ethnic Students.*

Issues and Challenges	Student Disruptions
Bullying or discrimination	Non-inclusive students may face bullying or discrimination due to their religion, ethnicity, disability or cultural practices. This can take the form of physical, verbal or online harassment and lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance.
Negative stereotypes and misconceptions	Non-inclusive students may encounter negative stereotypes and misconceptions about their religion, culture, disability or way of life. This can create a hostile and unwelcoming environment and make it difficult for these students to feel accepted and valued.

Lack of representation	Non-inclusive students may feel that their religion, culture, disability or experiences are not represented in their schools or classrooms. This can make it difficult for them to feel a sense of belonging or to see themselves reflected in the curriculum or materials being used.
Difficulty accessing resources and support	Minority students or students with disability may have difficulty accessing resources and support due to low self-esteem, language differences, or lack of awareness about their needs. This can lead to feelings of isolation and alienation, making it harder for these students to find support or assistance.
Stereotypes	Disability students may face negative stereotypes and assumptions about their abilities and potential. This can impact their self-esteem and confidence, and make it harder for them to advocate for themselves and pursue their goals.
Physical, technological, or communication barriers	Students with disabilities may face physical, technological or communication barriers that make it difficult for them to fully participate in school activities. This can limit their opportunities and prevent them from reaching their full potential.
Ignorant mindsets and personalities	Regardless of being Muslim or non-inclusive, students of colleges or universities may exhibit unethical behavior due to their ignorant mindsets and personalities. These students may fully accept things without critically analyzing overwhelming information and data from artificial intelligence platforms.

Source: Author Field Analysis

Incorporating Qur'anic Pedagogical Metaphysics in Tertiary Education

Today, the employment market is facing a significant issue with graduates lacking critical thinking skills, as highlighted by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) and Flores, Matkin, Burbach, Quinn and Harding (2012). These authors argue that universities are not adequately preparing students to think critically and make informed decisions once they enter the workforce. This lack of cognitive processing skills leads to less effective leaders, which has significant implications for leadership in various industries. Despite higher education being tasked with producing critical thinkers, current educational systems have been found to be inadequate in fostering these skills. Private higher education

needs to realize their current educational framework is capitalism-oriented with zero effort in fostering critical thinking due to lack of virtue behavior. Lilienfeld, Ammirati and David (2012) recommend enhancing psychological thinking with emotional practice. To address this issue, a global subject on world civilization philosophy can be integrated into the university curriculum with the aim of harmonizing graduate wisdom and spiritual fulfilment in order to understand the complexities of human emotions. Developing critical thinking skills is crucial for tertiary students as it enables them to make inferences, investigate assumptions, deduce logically, interpret, and evaluate, as emphasized by various studies such as Zabit (2010), Hashim and Jemali (2017) and Osman and Embong (2020). One effective method for integrating these skills into the university curriculum is problem-based learning.

Additionally, using the Qur'an through a Thematic Approach to the Exegesis of the Qur'an, as proposed by Hussain (2021) and Namazi (n.d.), also plays a significant role in nurturing critical thinking. This modern and innovative method of interpreting the Qur'an involves analyzing its themes, ideas and concepts, rather than just word-by-word analysis. This approach allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of the Qur'an's message by connecting its teachings to real-life situations, making it more relatable and relevant to daily life. Additionally, it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the text as it explores the Qur'an's overall message, rather than just its literal meaning. By using a Thematic and *Tadabbur* approach, learners can approach the Qur'an with a new and more holistic perspective, making it a more accessible and appealing way to understand the text's teachings and apply them to one's life.

Islamic education underlines several key principles such as the centrality of the Qur'an and Sunnah, character development, critical thinking, teacher's guidance, seeking knowledge, use of parables, repetition and emphasis, and the use of rhetorical devices. These principles are highlighted by various studies such as Hussin, Noh and Tamuri (2014), Memon and Alhashmi (2018), Alkouatli (2018) and Ajem and Memon (2023), which accentuate Qur'anic verse as the primary

source of guidance and instruction. Islamic education highlights moral values and the development of good character as being equal to knowledge and skills. It encourages students to think critically, seek knowledge, and understand through questioning and inquiry with the help of a knowledgeable teacher. The Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of seeking knowledge (Chapter 2, verse 282) from different sources and uses parables and stories (Chapter 18, verse 32) as a way of conveying its teachings in an easy- to-understand and memorable way, repeating key ideas and concepts for emphasis (Chapter 33, verse 41). Additionally, the Qur'an uses rhetorical devices (Chapter 13, verse 3) to engage readers and convey messages more effectively.

The Qur'an encourages individuals to rely on God and have faith in Allah when facing challenges and hardship (Refer verse 2:155), thereby fostering a powerful cognitive and affective concept of hope in Islam. According to Sheldrake (2012), Davids et al., (2022), Ibrahim (2022) and Hope (2022), this hope is rooted in spiritual transcendence and the pursuit of good deeds and meaning beyond materialism. It also refers to the Arabic word *raja* which indicates hope stemming from consciousness, taqwa, and the love of Allah. Furthermore, this hope is proactive and long-term, as opposed to the static concept of amal. It is considered one of the greatest manifestations of the heart and a central element of worship in Islam. In education, fostering hope can be achieved through dialogue and criticality between teacher and student, leading to the development of critical citizens with the potential to bring about change in themselves and their communities. This transformative learning process can be broken down into several stages: Disorienting Dilemma, Questioning and Deconstruction, Reframing and Restructuring, and Shift in Consciousness. By going through this process, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of themselves, the world around them, and their relationship with Allah, leading to a more profound sense of hope that is rooted in faith or spiritual transcendence.

In order to bridge the gap between critical thinking skills and spiritual accomplishment, higher education institutions must integrate a global subject on world civilization philosophy, problem-based learning,

and a Thematic Approach to the Exegesis of the Qur'an, as well as incorporating key principles of Islamic education. By doing so, universities can effectively prepare graduates to think critically and make informed decisions, while also fostering spiritual gratification and understanding the complexities of human emotions. However, this is not enough in today's globalized world, where understanding and recognizing differences in gender, culture and religion is crucial for fostering values like mutual trust, respect, tolerance, justice and dignity. This is where the integration of world civilization philosophy in education comes in. As suggested by Aybakan (2006) and Sahin (2018), creating reflective dialogue across diverse cultures and developing intercultural competence in education is necessary to achieve this.

Additionally, reviving the tradition of pedagogic curiosity to inspire new dialogue and understanding the importance of considering Tawhid and Fiqh for addressing social issues is equally essential. A Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) by Inouye et al. (1990), Buggey (2005) and Wei, Fearing, Sternberg and Inouye (2008) replicated this as best practice for diagnosing confusion among learners. Nevertheless, it is important to consult a qualified professional neuropsychologist or educational psychologist to determine the best approach for the individual student. This diagnostic algorithm evaluates students for disorganized thinking, disorientation and perceptual disturbances. By asking specific questions about the learners' ability to focus, level of motor activity, and study patterns, teachers, as professional counselors, can accurately assess and diagnose confusion among students and adjust their coaching style to accommodate students with learning disabilities. Integrating these ideas may provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to education, fostering critical thinking skills, moral values and universal understanding, creating a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere for students to seek knowledge and live in. One of the great challenges for Malaysian education is addressing the clichéd excuses deeply ingrained at school, university and tertiary education. Table 4 below shows the authors' experiential analysis of working for almost twenty years in several private colleges/universities across Malaysia.

Table 4. Schools and Universities Teachers-Learners Cliché Problem Syndrome.

Syndrome	School/Faculty Administration Resolution
Lack of resources	1. Implement a school-wide resource-sharing program to ensure teachers can access the needed materials.
	2. Secure funding for additional resources through grants or community fundraising.
	3. Allow teachers to request specific resources or materials and make it a priority to provide them promptly.
Large class sizes	1. Hire additional teachers to have ideal number of students in each class
	2. Implement a system for rotating small groups or one-on-one instruction.
	3. Implement technology-assisted instruction to help teachers manage large class sizes more effectively.
Limited time	1. Prioritize planning and preparation time for teachers in the school schedule.
	2. Provide professional development opportunities during school hours or release time.
	3. Implement online or digital tools to streamline administrative tasks such as grading and attendance tracking.
Lack of support	1. Create a mentoring program for new teachers and provide ongoing support and professional development opportunities.
	2. Establish regular communication channels between teachers and administrators to address concerns and provide feedback.
	3. Allow teachers to take a leadership role in school and district-wide initiatives to increase their sense of agency.

	4. Implement a peer support program for students to connect and support one another. School/faculty to strictly screening & employ teacher/lecturer with modest, trustworthy and decent akhlaq personality.
Student behavior problems	1. Develop a school-wide behavior management program which all teachers consistently enforce.
	2. Provide the teacher professional development opportunities on behavior and classroom management strategies.
	3. Provide appropriate support for students with behavioral issues, such as counseling or specialized instruction.
Stress and burnout	1. Establish a school-wide culture of self-care, including necessary breaks and promote nature-based relaxation.
	2. Provide professional development opportunities on stress management and work-life balance.
	3. Provide a confidential resource for teachers to address personal or professional concerns.
Lack of diversity	1. Develop and implement a school-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion plan.
	2. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers on culturally responsive instruction and teaching diverse learners.
	3. Increase representation of diverse teachers, staff and student population in the school.
Lack of time	1. Implement flexible class schedules, such as evening or weekend classes, to accommodate students with other responsibilities.
	2. Provide curricula alteration to help students manage their time while completing their coursework.

	3. Implement online or digital tools to facilitate remote and flexible learning.
Difficulty in understanding course material	1. Provide additional support such as tutoring or office hours.
	2. Provide students with resources such as study guides or online tutorials.
	3. Allow students to work in small groups or with partners to help them understand the coursework or learning material better.
Procrastination	1. Teach students effective time management strategies.
	2. Implement goal-setting strategies and hold students accountable for their progress.
	3. Support students with resources to overcome procrastination, such as providing psychological inspiration.
Lack of motivation	1. Create opportunities for student engagement and ownership of the learning process
	2. Provide personalized and differentiated instruction.
	3. Build a positive classroom culture that values student voice and choice.
Financial constraint (common problem in almost all private colleges/university)	1. Provide financial aid and scholarship information and assistance to students.
	2. Offer affordable course materials and alternative textbook options.
	3. Develop partnerships with local organizations and businesses to support students financially.

Mental health issues	1. Provide access to counseling and mental health services for students.
	2. Develop a school-wide mental wellness culture that prioritizes and destigmatizes mental health concerns.
	3. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to identify & support students with mental health concerns.

Source: Author Workplace Exploration

Application and Restoration of Islamic AI Educational Tools for Muslim Schools

The pedagogical process is a crucial aspect of education and it takes place within the pedagogical system, which includes components such as students, teachers, goals, results, learning content, teaching aids, methods, techniques and technologies (Kholikova, 2021)). The relationship between the formation and development of innovative thinking skills among students is mainly carried out in the *tarbiyah* process. One of the ways to enhance this process is through the use of interactive technologies. Suroso, Hendriarto, Pattiasina and Aslan (2021) highlight that the integration of digital technology into elementary and other public school learning is highly regarded and supported by relevant parties, particularly the government, as a means of modernizing and enhancing education. AI technology has shown to be effective in improving and updating the learning experience, as well as integrating religious education with technology in an effective and productive way. Studies on smart classrooms and smart schools have identified several important themes, including technological and pedagogical innovations, management systems, inclusion and sustainability (Mogas, Palau, Fuentes & Cebrián, 2022).

However, many schools, especially in Muslim countries, have not yet fully implemented advanced educational technologies. Interactive learning, as described by MB Islam, Ahmed, MK Islam and Shamsuddin

(2014), is a computer-based learning system that responds to students' actions by presenting contents such as texts, graphics, animation, video, audio and so on. This interactive blended approach has been found to greatly promote students' ability to acquire knowledge and skills. When students are taught using a blended system, the majority give correct answers that are much higher compared to traditional and visual learning methods. The impact of interactive learning materials is exclusively high in improving their earning skills and adaptation by the blending learning system. The improvement of students' learning skills, especially when interactive learning materials are used as the main resources by the teacher, is a proven fact. Kim, Hong and Song (2019), explain that a Learning Management System (LMS) is another powerful tool that can greatly enhance e-learning experiences. It allows unskilled teachers to personalize learning by creating custom lesson plans and assessments for each student, based on their abilities and progress.

Additionally, with an LMS, multimedia content can be delivered, keeping students engaged and motivated. The LMS also facilitates collaboration and communication between students and teachers, fostering a sense of community and belonging. The LMS provides access to a wide variety of educational resources and tools, making it a comprehensive and versatile solution for any classroom. Mangione and Cannella (2021) suggest that Distance Learning involves taking classes remotely using technology, like a computer or smartphone. It can be an effective way to learn, but it requires good internet connectivity and technical skills. Many schools use it as an alternative to traditional in-person classes.

On the other hand, Smeda, Dakich and Sharda (2014) heighten digital storytelling in the classroom as a game-changer in education. It offers a unique pedagogical model called e-Learning Digital Storytelling or eLDiSt assist in constructivist learning. Not only does it bring out the engagement of all three senses, but boosts students' technical literacy, adding a personal touch to the learning experience and students' confidence as well as social and psychological skills. Meanwhile, Arifin, Rindaningsih and Kalimah (2021), found that a smart wheel learning tool

was effective in teaching Aqidah to third grade Islamic elementary students, resulting in a 95 percent success rate in terms of behavior, knowledge, attitudes or skills enhancement. Smart wheel learning is a teaching method that utilizes a visual, interactive tool, often in the form of a digital wheel or diagram, to present and reinforce educational content. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of smart wheel learning will depend on how it is used and integrated into the overall teaching and learning programs.

Other findings (Nisak, Arifin, Fahyuni & Rahmawati, 2021) proved that comic- formatted Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) textbooks can potentially enhance Muslim children's elementary pedagogical methods. Comics are more engaging and interactive for students. They often use visual elements such as illustrations, dialogue bubbles and panel layouts to convey information while appealing to students. Comics help to break up large blocks of text and make the material approachable for young learners. Conversely, teachers are advised that AI technology is merely a tool for promoting classroom learning and should be tailored to schools and communities individually. Furthermore, professional development and training for educators are essential to guarantee that they have the skills and competence to employ technology efficiently. It is recommended that these tools be implemented after considering each student's needs and upbringing. Practical collaboration among educators, students and parents is required to develop, implement and evaluate any AI-tech education to ensure that it meets the learner's learning goals. Furthermore, it needs to include Sharia compliance information (for Muslim students) while giving non-inclusive students an equal opportunity to succeed using AI learning technology (Oyaid, 2009; Sahlin, Tsertsidis & Islam, 2017; Pokrivčáková, 2019). The following are eight characteristics of ideal rural schools' locality for AI pedagogical services as digital assistance to teachers:

1. Language Learning—Adopted an AI-powered chatbot that provides resources in multiple language learning, such as Arabic or other second language learning (ESL).

2. Personalized Learning—AI-powered learning algorithm that adapts to individual student's prior knowledge, performance, and learning goals.

3. Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)—Provide AI-powered Automatic Speech Recognition to assist students with speech disabilities in transcribing speech.

4. Digital facilities + sustainable school—Interactive whiteboards, laptops and tablets installed with AI Islamic education apps and learning management systems for teachers to access or share the learning resources online and offline. AI-enabled intelligent devices such as thermostats and light bulbs are installed for schools to adjust temperature or classroom lighting settings automatically.

5. Classroom and Lesson Plan Management—AI education virtual assistant to help a teacher with academic administration matters. Examples: teacher-student timetable, teaching workloads, training programs, student attendance form, Teacher's lesson plan, subject modules preparation, hands-on plan, experiential learning etc.

6. AI-educational training for rural teachers—Ministry Education to train and coach rural teachers in the professional adoption of AI-classroom pedagogical continuously. A tech-savvy teachers team is compulsory in each rural school across the nation.

7. High-speed internet and robust network infrastructure—Rural schools, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, are in extreme poverty of E-learning internet coverage. Purposely neglected by the Federal Malaysia government for the past 60 years, the rural area of this region required speed development on sustainable electricity and ICT learning infrastructure.

8. Provision of AI Sharia-compliance educational apps—Ethical utilization of AI inside the classroom. The software providers must be transparent about their apps and classroom

applications. Involves parents and the community to contribute in the decision making process as means to support student study circles.

According to Sarker, Wu, Cao, Alam and Li (2019), a systematic review on digital technology leverage revealed that there are only four domains of technology in education that can be utilized for electronic, mobile, digital or ubiquitous learning. The authors recommend these domains to be integrated at four stages of curriculum development, such as pre-learning, learning process, learning process procedure, and delivery mode to fully benefit from digital leveraging. However, it is crucial to continuously innovate and transform the traditional teaching-learning setting. The integration of Table 5 in classroom pedagogy has been proven to be an effective approach in education as it allows students to actively engage with the material through problem-solving and direct interaction, instead of passive absorption. Digital learning, on the other hand, utilizes technology such as computers, tablets, and online platforms to aid in the learning process, providing flexibility and self- paced learning.

Blended learning (BL) (Oweis, 2018) and ubiquitous learning (U-learning) (Yahya, Ahmad & Abd Jalil, 2010; Cárdenas-Robledo & Peña-Ayala, 2018) are two innovative approaches to education that utilize technology to enhance the learning experience. These innovative approaches have their own set of advantages and limitations and it is crucial to take them into consideration when designing and implementing educational technology in order to meet the diverse needs of students and improve the overall learning experience.

Table 5. *Integration of Traditional, Interactive, Digital and Ubiquitous Pedagogy.*

Pedagogical Approach	School Setting	Learning Activities
Traditional	Involves lectures and textbooks as the primary means of instruction. May include teacher-led discussions and class participation. Usually takes place in a physical classroom setting.	Reciting and memorizing verses from the Qur'an. Participating in a class discussion on a topic related to Islamic beliefs or practices. Writing an essay on the history of Islam or the life of Prophets.
Interactive	Involves student participation and collaboration in the learning process. May include group discussions, hands-on activities, and project-based learning. Can take place in a physical classroom setting or online.	Working in a small group to create a presentation on an Islamic topic or issue. Participating in a role-playing activity where students act out scenarios related to Islamic values and beliefs. Collaborating with classmates to create a multimedia project on a topic related to Muslim cultures.
Digital	Involves the use of technology, such as computers and online platforms, to facilitate learning. May include multimedia resources, such as videos and interactive simulations Can be self-paced and flexible, and may take place online or in a physical classroom setting	Completing an online quiz or assessment on Islamic curriculum & practices. Watching a video or multimedia presentation on an Islamic topic and taking notes. Using an online simulation or interactive tool to explore a concept or process related to Islamic curriculum.

		Accessing Islamic educational resources or assignments through a mobile app or online platform.
Blended & Ubiquitous	Uses Artificial Intelligence to provide access to educational resources and opportunities anytime, anywhere. May involve the use of mobile and online technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, to facilitate learning. May also involve the use of social media and other online platforms to facilitate communication or collaboration between learners-educators	Collaborating with classmates or teachers on an Islamic topic through a social media platform or online collaboration tool. Using a mobile device or laptop to access Islamic educational materials and resources in a variety of settings, such as at home, madrasah, masjid or learning center.

Simplified from: *Islam, Rahim, Liang and Momtaz (2011), Behjat, Yamini and Bagheri (2012) and Al-Qahtani and Higgins (2013)*

Conclusion

The integration of AI and interactive technology in education is crucial for modernizing learning experiences. AI technologies like Learning Management Systems, digital storytelling, and interactive learning can enhance students' abilities and engagement. However, effective adoption requires addressing resource availability, teacher training, and internet infrastructure. Collaboration among educators, students, and parents is essential for bridging traditional pedagogies with innovative digital approaches. Regularly offering teachers with reliable resources and support, such as professional development opportunities, instructional materials, or support personnel, will improve teaching-learning effectiveness and promote student achievement. Celebrating teachers' achievements, providing regular feedback, setting clear goals and expectations for students helps teachers steadfast their efforts, as well as creates a supportive working atmosphere. By executing

these strategies, society empower teachers to be the best educators and ensure a positive, collective, and sustainable learning environment across Malaysian schools. In the future, this research may look into the effectiveness of integrating Quranic metaphysics into tertiary education in shaping Muslim students' cognitive, emotional, and moral development.

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Appendix I

Research Framework Design Objectives   • To explore and analyze the challenges posed by the intersection of Islamic philosophy and secular education in the context of postmodern civilization (Malaysia Context)   • To offer recommendations for educators, policy makers, and researchers aimed at bridging the gap between Islamic principles and secular educational practices (Malaysia Context)
Research Setting   o Institute Technology Tun Abdul Razak ITTAR Petaling Jaya   o Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT) Cyberjaya   o Management and Science University (MSU) College, Kota Kinabalu   o Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARUC), Kota Kinabalu
Methodological Approach Qualitative Research: o Experiential Learning 20 years of Teaching-Learning Experience   o Mentoring Program   o Member Checking   o Triangulation
Data Collection Methods   o Classroom Experience & Observations   o Counseling and Motivational Support   o Academic Administration and Event Participation
Data Analysis   o Thematic Analysis   o Reflexive Approach   o College/University homework & Assignment Analysis
Ethical Considerations   o Informed Consent   o Role as a Teacher/Lecturer   o Role as an Academic Management Team
Validation of Findings   o Member-Checking   o Triangulation

Research Findings

o   Identified Challenges – tables 2, 2, 3 and 4

o   Opportunities and Recommendations –

-   Incorporating Qur'anic Pedagogical Metaphysics in the Tertiary Education

-   Application & Restoration of Islamic AI Educational Technologies for Muslim Schools

Conclusion

o Summary of Findings