Embedding higher order thinking skills in Islamic history (*Sirah*) education in Malaysia

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

The promotion of integrating higher order thinking skills (HOTS) in the Malaysian education system is pivotal to producing analytical thinkers to keep up with the rapid globalization of this era. Thus, the implementation of HOTS in learning and facilitation (PdPc) has been emphasized. However, little is known about the integration of HOTS in Islamic history and civilization (*Sirah*) lessons. Furthermore, teachers continue to use traditional methods and disregard incorporating HOTS in PdPc. Therefore, the current study conducted an in-depth investigation into the components of *Sirah* lessons to support the implementation of the Malaysian education development plan (PPPM) 2013-2015 by strengthening teaching techniques through the use of HOTS for a better understanding of *Sirah* lessons. Using an explanatory sequential mixed method design, the findings reveal that the teaching components of *Sirah* lessons with the integration of HOTS are at a moderate level in the conclusion stage of a lesson. Therefore, the current study proposes a model that integrates HOTS, i.e., the element of attitude, preparation and planning, teaching aids with relevant aspects of PAK21, knowledge of HOTS, mastery of the subject content, teaching techniques and approach, assessment, and evaluation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of teaching and learning Islamic history and civilization (*Sirah*) lessons has to be emphasized for students to grasp current concerns related to the history of Islam and to have a practical impact on students' daily lives. However, according to Effindi [1], given the present growth of the Malaysian Education curriculum, which includes the integration of higher order thinking skills (HOTS), the pedagogy of *Sirah* lessons has to be re-examined. This is based on the Bloom [2], Anderson and Krathwohl [3] taxonomy model, which focuses on the abilities of the students to analyze, integrate, and translate knowledge of their experiences. Furthermore, transferring classroom learning to real-life applications should be coordinated with the different learning styles of the university students [4]–[7].

However, the integration of HOTS necessitates knowledge, comprehension, and the ability to transfer the functions of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor elements through teachers' and students' teaching and facilitation also known learning and facilitation (PdPc) practices. Learning *Sirah* lessons is

expected to develop students' thinking and produce students who appreciate, practice, and contribute to religion, society, and country beyond class time. Thus, Islamic education teachers as known *Guru Pendidikan Islam* (GPI) play a critical role in integrating *Sirah* lessons with HOTS in PdPc since *Sirah*, by its very nature, affects one's appreciation of life [1], [8]. Furthermore, this has been emphasized in the Malaysia education development plan 2013-2025.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive and systematic process of using one's intelligence, especially among students, can ensure confidence and appreciation of *Sirah* lesson. In addition to Bloom's taxonomy [2] and Anderson and Krathwohl [3] theories of HOTS, Islamic scholars such as Khaldun [9] classified a person's intellect into four primary levels, namely *tamyizi, tajribi, nazori,* and *insaniyah nature*, which play significant roles in setting a person's lives [10], [11]. The goal of teaching *Sirah* lessons at the secondary school level, based on Circular No. 11, is to understand the *Sirah* of Rasulullah SAW in Mecca, Madinah, and the contribution of Khulafa' ar-Rashidin, from which lessons can be extracted and applied in daily lives of the students [5]. As a result, the GPI must adopt effective instructions [5], [12]–[14]. This could be done by integrating HOTS into *Sirah* lessons [15]–[17].

The main issue from previous studies is the inconsistent and weak implementation of the HOTS components in *Sirah* lessons. According to previous studies [18], [19], the pedagogy of GPI is still traditional, and thus the implementation of HOTS components is still unsuccessful. In another study, it was found that, despite preparation, teachers' instruction using HOTS in PdPc was inconsistent, with examples that were less relevant and did not correspond to current reality [20]–[24]. Furthermore, there is a lack of methodological structure for the teaching components, i.e., the introduction, development, and conclusion of a lesson [23], [25]–[30]. Plus, the impact of inconsistent teaching problems, lack of lesson planning and preparation, and teacher-centered teaching methods create constraints on students' understanding, loss of focus for learning, and static student knowledge structure [31]–[36].

Based on the issues stated, there are flaws in the execution of GPI pedagogy, which cause adverse effects on students' learning of *Sirah* lessons. Besides, a few studies analyzed the components of a lesson, which include the introduction, development, and conclusion of a lesson with the integration of HOTS in *Sirah* lessons. This is critical in determining the extent to which the HOTS components have been applied throughout the learning and facilitating (PdPc) to address difficulties highlighted by previous studies [37]. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive and in-depth study involving GPI and the teaching components of *Sirah* lessons in the conclusion of a lesson that integrates HOTS, especially at the secondary school level.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the guidelines from previous researchers [38]–[40], this study utilizes an explanatory sequential mixed method research design with a 70% quantitative and a 30% qualitative approach. Questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to collect data. Quantitative methods are used as the first phase of the investigation to identify the structure of the teaching components (introduction, development, and conclusion of a lesson). Once the stages of teaching components are identified, a qualitative investigation of factors that influence the findings was conducted to gather more in-depth and comprehensive data to develop a model of the conclusion components of *Sirah* lesson that integrates HOTS [11], [21], [41]–[43]. Participants in the first phase of the data collection stage were 406 teachers, and later five outstanding GPI were selected. Figure 1 presents the two phases of data collection adapted from previous studies [39], [42], [44].
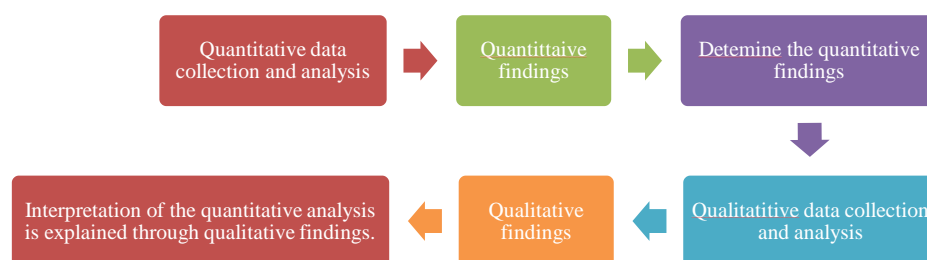

Figure 1. Explanatory sequential mixed method research design

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the current study was to identify the implementation of the conclusion components for the *Sirah* lesson that integrates HOTS. Data was collected through a set of questionnaires distributed to all GPIs. The instrument was divided into three sections: a reflection of lesson objectives, a summary of lesson content, and an assessment of students' understanding. However, this study focused only on the reflection of lesson objectives that integrate HOTS.

4.1. Lesson objectives integrating HOTS

Table 1 presents the findings for the reflections of lesson objectives that integrate HOTS. All items were recorded a medium high and medium values. The results showed that all items analyzed in detail recorded mean score in the highest order were item d02 (min=4.00; sp=.742), d05 (min=3.92; sp=.775), d06 (min=3.91; sp=.773), d04 (min=3.58; sp=.871), d03 (min=3.47; sp=.901), and d01 (min=3.19; sp=1.039).

In summary, the descriptive analysis of the lesson objectives reflection highlights that teachers verbally review lesson objectives at the end of the lesson. The reflection approach focused on interaction with students, stating justification, and relating to daily activities. However, writing reflections in a book and asking students to give reasons for each reflection produced in the *Sirah* lesson is still poorly implemented since findings show a moderate mean score level (3.68), which may be due to time constraints.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the implementation of lesson objectives that integrates HOTS in a secondary school *Sirah* education

Item	Description	Mode and percentage					Min	S. P	Int
		TP (%)	JJ (%)	KK (%)	K (%)	SK (%)			
D01	I ask students to write a reflection on the Sirah lesson in the book	28 (6.9)	67 (16.5)	146 (36.0)	129 (31.8)	36 (8.9)	3.19	1.039	S
D02	I interact with students to achieve the objectives of the Sirah lesson	1 (0.2)	13 (3.2)	67 (16.5)	230 (56.7)	95 (23.4)	4.00	.742	ST
D03	I ask students to give reasons for each reflection generated from the Sirah lesson.	10 (2.5)	48 (11.8)	127 (31.3)	185 (45.6)	36 (8.9)	3.47	.901	S
D04	I asked students to self-reflect on what was learnt from the Sirah lesson and relate it to their daily behavior	5 (1.2)	41 (10.1)	122 (30.0)	190 (46.8)	48 (11.8)	3.58	.871	ST
D05	At the end of the Sirah lesson, I execute the reflection of the lesson objective that has been set	2 (0.5)	16 (3.9)	80 (19.7)	224 (55.2)	84 (20.7)	3.92	.775	ST
D06	I execute reflection verbally during the Sirah lesson	3 (0.7)	13 (3.2)	83 (20.4)	224 (55.2)	83 (20.4)	3.91	.773	ST
	Total min						3.68		ST

4.2. Descriptive analysis of the overall implementation of the conclusion component in the secondary school *Sirah* lesson

Overall, the findings for implementing the conclusion component that integrates HOTS recorded moderately high (mean=3.83). The findings for the integration of HOTS or teaching elements revealed that all three components; reflecting on lesson objectives (mean=3.68), summarizing the content of the lesson (mean=3.82), and assessing students' understanding (mean=3.99), all show a pattern of implementation at a moderate to a high level. In sum, the descriptive analysis for all the three elements in the conclusion of a lesson that integrates HOTS is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the overall mean score and percentage for the implementation of conclusion component that integrates HOTS in secondary school *Sirah* lesson

Item	Description conclusion component	Mode	Variance	Min	Int
D01	Conduct reflection of a lesson that integrates HOTS	406	0.733	3.68	ST
D02	Formulate teaching content that integrates HOTS	406	0.578	3.82	ST
D03	Assess students' understanding of integrating HOTS	406	0.496	3.99	ST
	Close lesson by integrating HOTS	406	0.601	3.83	ST

The results showed that the conclusion component of the *Sirah* lesson is at a moderate-high level. Therefore, the need for researchers to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive study using qualitative methods is necessary. Besides, the extent and reasons for the conclusion of a lesson were recorded as moderately high, which affects the overall implementation of lesson components integrating HOTS needs

further explanation. The researcher selected five outstanding Islamic education (GCPI) teachers as the study sample. Table 3 presents the themes retrieved from the qualitative data, which was later used to develop a model integrating HOTS in the conclusion stage of the *Sirah* lesson.

Table 3. Element model themes influencing the implementation of conclusion component integrating HOTS by GCPI

Implementation of integration HOTS		Mode				
Themes and codes	Sub-themes and codes	GCPI01	GCPI02	GCPI03	GCPI04	GCPI05
Elements that contribute to the implementation of the conclusion component	Attitude	/	/	/	/	/
	Preparation and planning	/	/	/	/	/
	HOTS knowledge	/	/	/	/	/
	Mastery of contents	/	/	/	/	/
	Teaching aid (BBM)	/	/	/	/	/
	Approach, method, and techniques	/	/	/	/	/
	Evaluation	/	/	/	/	/
	Reinforcement	/	/	/	/	/
	Time management		/			
	Ideas			/		

The eight main elements that form the theme to develop a model for the implementation of the conclusion of a lesson that integrates HOTS based on GCPI observations are shown in Figure 2. This includes attitude, preparation, planning, HOTS knowledge, content mastery, teaching aid, methodological and technical approaches, evaluation, and reinforcement. Elements of this model were identified through observations, interviews, and document analysis.
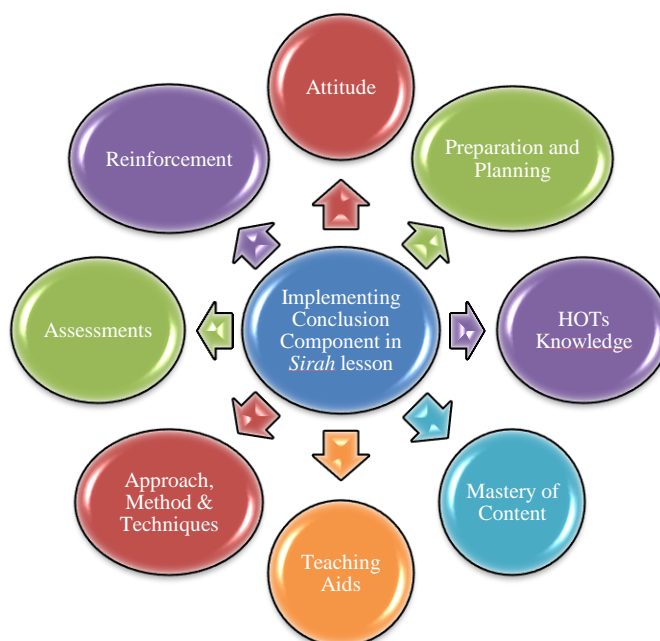

Figure 2. Integration model of HOTS in the conclusion stage of *Sirah* lesson

The findings of the current study are consistent with previous studies [45]–[47], emphasizing the importance of a conclusion component for systematic and effective teaching. This also strengthens the notion that the final stage of a lesson is a critical phase in ensuring the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Furthermore, the findings of this construct also confirm the theory by Al-Qabisi [48] that teachers should reflect on their teaching by reflecting on student achievement and personality based on the PdPc structure from the beginning of the lesson.

The discussions related to the reflection of lesson objective items that integrate HOTS recorded a scale of moderately high level (mean 3.68). This can be explained through a simple implementation focusing on the

verbal method and the existing syllabus. However, several researchers [32], [49]–[51] argued that this type of reflection is usually implemented at the closure of a lesson to encapsulate the entire concept, principles, and ideas of the lesson content. This ensures students understand the integration between the concepts, principles, and impact of *Sirah* lesson on their lives.

The descriptive findings are in line with previous researchers [32], [49]–[51]. It was highlighted that teaching and learning require continuous interaction between teachers and students, especially at the conclusion stage, where teachers will gauge the extent to which the lesson objectives have been achieved. Moreover, teachers' method of measuring student reflection is consistent with the learning model [52]–[54] who highlighted the need to recall and summarize what had been learned from the beginning of the lesson.

The findings for the conclusion of a lesson component show a moderate implementation pattern which led the researcher to investigate the factors through the interview, observation, and document analysis. The findings suggest that the attitude of teachers, lesson preparation and planning, knowledge of HOTS and mastery of lesson content, teaching aids, approach, assessments, and implementation are the challenges teachers face to achieve the lesson objectives. This investigation approach is similar to previous study [41] who highlighted that implementing lesson reflection requires adequate preparation to ensure that it aligns with lesson objectives.

The reflection of lesson objectives needs to be further strengthened by integrating HOTS. Besides, teachers need to interact with students to achieve the *Sirah* lesson objectives and allow students to self-reflect by relating what has been learnt from *Sirah* lessons to their daily behavior. To reiterate, it is crucial to reflect on the lesson objectives by verbally asking students based on the suitability of the topic and the current situation. From the current context, this study meets the recommendations put forward by the Ministry of Education (MoE) through the 21st century standard practice of teaching criteria. This criterion places the need for students to give proactive feedback on what has been learned without relying entirely on explanations from teachers. Furthermore, the integration between the objectives and the implementation of teaching can be translated by formulating lesson content, whether teacher or student-oriented. In summary, the lesson objectives that integrate HOTS are reflected in Table 4.

Table 4. Implementation of objective reflection (RO) integrate HOTS

OP implementation	Level of intellect based on Ibn Khaldun	The Integration of HOTS in OP	Improvement
Verbal reflections on lesson objectives are implemented based on the syllabus and presented at the closure of a lesson. This is conducted with the teacher delivering information without involving student activities.	*Aql' Tamyiz* *Aql' Tajribi* *Aql' Nazori* *Insaniyah reality*	Reflection is implemented based on the need. Its implementation is through interaction between teachers and students to expand the idea thoroughly.	Teachers need to improve readiness, especially on the content of the lesson objectives and how to adapt the objectives in daily life. The elements of knowledge, commitment, and skills by GPI determine the quality of the reflection.

5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of HOTS focusing on the classroom PdPc and the components of a lesson was initiated in Malaysia back in 2013. However, very few studies were conducted in the field of *Sirah*. Thus, the current study investigated in-depth research on the components of the *Sirah* lesson to help the MoE to add value to the implementation of the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2015 and improve the teaching methods with the integration of HOTS.

The findings highlighted that the teaching component of the *Sirah* lesson is still at a moderate level, although the implementation of HOTS started long ago. Thus, this study provides a guideline to help GPI teach *Sirah* lessons by integrating HOTS elements, i.e., attitude, preparation and planning, teaching aids with selective PAK21 aspects, knowledge of HOTS, and mastery of lesson content, methods and techniques, assessment, and reinforcement. In addition, the current study suggests further investigation into the other components of the *Sirah* lesson, i.e., the introduction and the development stage, to help GPI produce students who can relate *Sirah* lessons as an example or model to face the current reality successfully.

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