Modeling Strategies in Teaching Critical Thinking in Islamic Education

Strategi Permodelan dalam Pengajaran Berfikir Kritis Pendidikan Islam

NURSAFRA MOHD ZHAFFAR*, NORWATI ABU BAKAR &
NURUL ASIAH FASEHAH MUHAMAD

ABSTRACT

Critical teachers are needed to develop critical students. A teacher's appearance in terms of actions, speech, and critical thinking sets a powerful example that students might emulate. However, research indicates that modeling becomes less effective if the actions to be emulated do not come with clear instructions meant for the intended audience. Therefore, this study aims to explore modeling strategies in the teaching of Islamic Education (IE) that incorporate critical thinking by excellent Islamic Education teachers. The purpose of this modeling carried out by teachers is to ensure that the skills, attitudes, and values of critical thinking can be emulated by students. This study is a qualitative case study involving a group of six excellent Islamic Education teachers. Data were collected over a period of 12 months using interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal two main themes in the teachers' modeling strategies: modeling through teaching techniques and modeling through the teachers' overall behavior. The study found that teachers implemented modeling strategies by demonstrating the boundaries of thinking in IE teaching, guiding students to develop a thinking framework based on Islamic principles. This research suggests that effective modeling in fostering critical thinking requires teachers to integrate both explicit and implicit applications of thinking in their teaching practices routinely. This continuous process helps students become aware of their thinking skills and apply them within the framework of a Muslim lifestyle. A conceptual framework for the modeling of critical thinking in Islamic education has been developed by this study.

Keywords: Modeling, critical thinking, Islamic Education, Islamic Education teachers

ABSTRAK

Guru yang kritis diperlukan bagi membentuk murid yang kritis. Penampilan yang ditonjolkan oleh seorang guru dari aspek tindakan, percakapan dan cara berfikir kritis menjadi contoh hidup yang berkesan untuk diikuti oleh para murid. Namun, kajian menyatakan permodelan menjadi kurang berkesan sekiranya tindakan untuk ditiru itu tidak disertakan dengan mesej kepada golongan sasaran. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka strategi permodelan dalam pengajaran Pendidikan Islam (PI) yang menerapkan pemikiran kritis oleh guru cemerlang Pendidikan Islam. Tujuan aktiviti permodelan ini dilakukan oleh guru supaya kemahiran, sikap dan nilai berfikir secara kritis dapat ditiru oleh murid. Kajian ini berbentuk kajian kes kualitatif melibatkan sekelompok 6 orang guru cemerlang PI. Data dikumpul selama 12 bulan menggunakan kaedah temu bual, pemerhatian pengajaran dan analisis dokumen. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat dua tema utama strategi permodelan oleh guru iaitu permodelan melalui teknik pengajaran dan permodelan dalam bentuk keseluruhan tingkah laku guru. Dapatan kajian menemui bahawa guru melaksanakan strategi permodelan batasan berfikir dalam pengajaran PI ke arah memupuk kerangka berfikir murid mengikut acuan syarak. Kajian ini menyarankan agar permodelan yang berkesan dalam penerapan pemikiran kritis memerlukan guru sedaya-upaya menerapkan secara tersurat dan tersirat aplikasi berfikir dalam amalan pengajarannya secara rutin. Proses berterusan ini menjadikan murid peka dengan penguasaan kemahiran berfikir mereka serta mengaplikasikannya dalam kerangka hidup seorang Muslim. Kajian ini menghasilkan satu kerangka konseptual strategi permodelan pemikiran kritis dalam pengajaran PI.

Kata kunci: Permodelan, pemikiran kritis, Pendidikan Islam, Guru Pendidikan Islam

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is defined by John Dewey as "active, persistent and careful consideration of a belief or a supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Fisher, 2001, p.2). Meanwhile, the most widely used definition today is based on Ennis (1985). Ennis defines critical thinking as reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or what action to take. Similarly, Alsaleh (2020) summarizes that critical thinking is a person's thought process that begins with the aim of solving an issue or answering a question by investigating different viewpoints and ultimately selecting the most appropriate and reasonable answer. There are various other terms referred to by scholars as synonymous with critical thinking, such as reflective thinking, reasonable or logical thinking, and scientific thinking (Fisher, 2001). Additionally, several other scholars have conceptualized critical thinking. However, these definitions share four main common aspects: critical thinking a) requires reflection, b) involves skills, c) contains elements of interpretation and evaluation, and d) aims to improve thinking abilities.

The integration of critical thinking skills into the subject of Islamic Education (IE) aims to produce individuals who are harmonious, balanced, and pious, capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the nation. Mastering these skills helps students transfer their experience of critically analyzing classroom activities to real-life situations, especially when facing critical moments of decision-making or problem-solving (Farah Adlina Mokter, 2019).

Critical thinking is also linked to faith. When something is understood rationally, it has the potential to become a deeply rooted belief in the heart and influence actions. Conversely, if faith is viewed as a dogma that must be accepted without understanding, it becomes fragile in critical or difficult moments (Mohd Zaidi, 2018, 2014). Thus, critical thinking in IE serves as a means of deepening one's faith (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023; Ashraf, 1988).

Therefore, the teaching approach recommended by the Ministry of Education Malaysia for IE involves in-depth discussions that address life's broad, interesting, practical, and relevant issues and questions from various aspects of knowledge. This approach aims to influence students' way of life as true Muslims (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2002). Further reference can be made to the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (KSSM) for Islamic Education.

According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2017), the integration of critical thinking is embedded within the KSSM framework. Teachers are required to organize specific lessons that instill structured and focused thinking among students. This strategy aligns with the goal of producing students with 21st-century skills, where students need to be "capable of evaluating ideas logically and rationally to make sound judgments by using reasonable arguments and evidence" (DSKP IE KSSM 2017:7). Thus, critical thinking allows the application of knowledge, skills, and values that students possess to make judgments within the context of Islamic teachings. The pattern of critical thinking in this learning standard includes the ability to explain differences, describe wisdom, and relate it to life. If this process occurs continuously, the knowledge learned can become a practice, internalized, and collectively cultivated both in and outside of school.

Since critical thinking is a skill, various approaches can be undertaken to foster its potential. One such approach is modeling activities. The significant influence teachers have on students can make these modeling activities successful in the classroom. Modeling means demonstrating an example to be imitated. Costa (1991) identified modeling as an essential feature of the teacher's behavior that stimulates students' thinking. Teachers can model behavior that demonstrates a critical thinker during the teaching and learning process. The purpose of these

modeling or demonstration is for students to emulate the skills, attitudes, and values of critical thinking.

Modeling is also discussed in Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction with more knowledgeable or experienced individuals. In other words, through observation in a particular environment, students can build knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, rules, and attitudes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). According to Lev Vygotsky , to achieve new understanding, students need assistance to cross the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through social interaction. In this regard, a more knowledgeable person is needed to provide support and assistance to ensure students' cognitive development is successful (Refer to Figure 1). In this study, the knowledgeable person refers to the teacher and the student's peers. The process of guiding students to gain new understanding is called scaffolding (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010).

Additionally, this theory states that modeling activities allow students to learn by observing, imitating, and then repeating. Based on this theory, teachers are encouraged to demonstrate the ongoing thought process or think aloud when solving problems or making decisions in the classroom. Through this, students will gain a better understanding as they hear explanations, know the justifications, and watch the teacher solve thinking tasks (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).
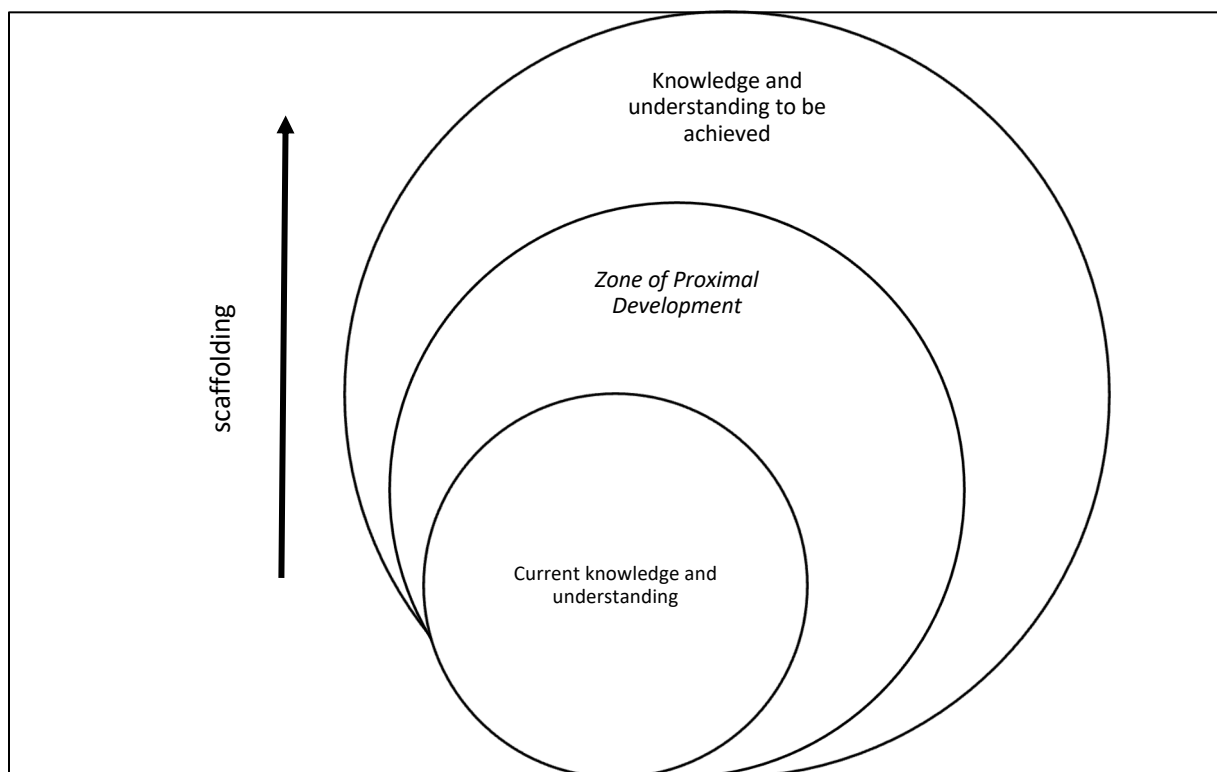

FIGURE 1. Position of Zone of Proximal Development
Source: Adapted from Pritchard & Woollard (2010)

From an Islamic perspective, this concept aligns with the principle of *qudwah hasanah* (exemplary leadership) practiced by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in educating his companions. The Prophet never instructed others to perform good deeds without first demonstrating them himself (Che Noraini, 2008). His exemplary leadership is evident in his ability to develop human resource

systems in various aspects of life, including self-leadership, business and entrepreneurship, social harmony, and an honorable political system. Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ example has been recognized by over 1.3 billion people and has proven effective for more than 15 centuries, remaining relevant to this day. His leadership transcends time and space (Candrakusuma, 2020).

This theory also supports al-Ghazali's (1988) model of teaching, which suggests that accompanying or closely observing righteous individuals helps students better understand matters of faith (*aqidah*) that they have followed since childhood. This implies the need for teachers to embody the attitudes and actions consistent with what they teach. As a result, students can witness clear examples of knowledge being practiced, making the modeling process easier. This demonstrates that Islam also acknowledges the value of practical guidance from experts to students during the educational process.

Previous studies have shown that critical teachers are needed to produce students with critical thinking skills (Wang & Jia, 2023; Rosnani Hashim, 2012). This is because critical teachers can model themselves as critical thinkers for students to emulate through classroom interactions. Modeling methods employed in the classroom have been shown to impact students' critical thinking skills (Zhang et al., 2023; Wagner, 2022). However, Goslin (2012) found that modeling becomes less effective when done implicitly, which is solely through actions, because the message conveyed through these actions may not reach the target audience. This can be due to differing interpretations or the actions going unnoticed, resulting in the intended imitation not occurring.

Previous studies on modeling by Islamic Education teachers (IET) in promoting higher-order thinking skills have been conducted by Tajul Rosli et al. (2019). This study found that Dusun students were seen more familiar with teachers' modeling than other ethnic groups. Modeling involves breaking down complex problems into manageable steps and encouraging students to learn how to approach similar challenges. This finding give input that the dilemma between beliefs (animism) and religions (Islam) is likely to cause the Dusun students showed more interest towards teachers' modeling. However, this study focused on measuring the differences in students' perception to teacher modeling based on ethnic groups in rural area of Kudat, Sabah.

Wagner (2022) discussed the essential elements of effective modeling, listing three key elements: a) careful observation, b) timely explanation, and c) practice. These three elements must be integrated and cannot be omitted to effectively develop students' critical thinking skills. While these elements have been generally discussed, Wagner's study was based on a literature review, and no field study in the Malaysian context was cited. Previous researchers have recommended that detailed studies on critical thinking-based teaching strategies consider the students' context and background (Alsaleh, 2020).

Thus, this study aims to explore the modeling strategies employed by IET in teaching that integrates critical thinking. The research question to be answered is: How do IET use modeling strategies in teaching to incorporate critical thinking skills?

The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the context of Islamic Education and the selection of participants, consisting of secondary school IET recognized by the State Education Department as outstanding teachers implementing thinking-based teaching in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This research used an exploratory qualitative approach in the form of a case study. It aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the modeling strategies that teachers apply to enhance students' critical thinking in the classroom. The researcher adopted a philosophical assumption aligned with the reality of diversity. This study focused on general ideas from the literature. The goal was to explore the phenomenon in detail based on the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were collected from multiple sources, such as interviews, classroom observations, and relevant documents, and then analyzed through participants' interpretations. The results were explained thoroughly within the research context, considering participants' experiences and perspectives. As a result, the researcher reported the diversity of perspectives, organized into themes identified in the findings.

The study was carried out in the natural classroom setting of teaching and learning (T&L) practices. Primary data were gathered through non-participant observation. The researcher observed from the back of the classroom without interfering with T&L activities. The lessons were recorded using a video camera.

The approach of gathering data also included semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted in-person interviews in Malay with participants, which lasted for half an hour to an hour. In order to get input on the lessons taught in the classroom and the modeling techniques employed by their teachers, the researcher engaged with students through interviews. Conversations were recorded using an audio device and documented in field notes. Interview data were used to triangulate observation data and document analysis, ensuring the consistency of findings across different sources. Triangulation was also achieved by cross-checking data, for example, through student interviews to gain diverse perspectives. Cross-checking was performed on repetitive observations and follow-up interviews with participants at different times. The analyzed documents included private materials produced by the participants, such as Daily Teaching Plans, worksheets, and newspaper clippings used in classroom activities.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The study used purposive sampling to select participants with the potential to provide in-depth insights, particularly regarding competency and experience. Following Merriam's (2009) suggestions, the main criteria for selecting participants were determined by several factors. The characteristics included:

1. Demonstrating critical teaching in Islamic Education classrooms by implementing student-centered teaching, encouraging students to ask questions, creating an open environment, using discussion methods, supporting diverse perspectives in problem-solving, and helping students draw conclusions.
2. Having over five years of teaching experience.
3. Being cooperative and accessible.

Due to the difficulty in identifying these characteristics, particularly in teaching practices related to critical thinking in Islamic Education, the researcher used network sampling strategies as suggested by Merriam (2009). The researcher obtained a list of potential participants from an

officer in the Academic Division of Islamic Education and Moral Sector under the Negeri Sembilan Education Department. This officer had knowledge of the teachers' potential and teaching quality through regular involvement in classroom observations. The researcher also consulted district education officers and school principals to gain further insights into the proposed teachers' attitudes, performance, and ability to address the research questions. As a result, the State Education Department recommended six teachers who met the selection criteria. These six teachers were treated as a single case to be analyzed, as they shared homogeneous characteristics based on the criteria. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. The Demographics of Participants

Participants	Gender	Teaching Experience	Service Grade	Education Level
Teacher A	Female	20 years	DG48	MA
Teacher B	Female	24 years	DG48	BA
Teacher C	Male	10 years	DG44	MA
Teacher D	Female	14 years	DG44	BA
Teacher E	Female	25 years	DG52	BA
Teacher F	Female	18 years	DG48	BA

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The study was approved by the Ministry of Education, State Education Department (Ref. no: KP(BPPDP)603/5/JLD.06(212)), school principals, and teachers involved in this study. Each study participant was provided with a previous description regarding the purpose of the study and the method of its implementation. In addition, explanations related to the ethics of confidentiality of information and entities that contribute data were provided. The participants signed a form of voluntary participation. The data collection lasted for 12 months.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collection and analysis processes were carried out concurrently. Once the transcription of the observation reports and interview data were complete, the researcher began with the analysis of Participant 1. The categories and topics were developed using thematic analysis via the constant comparative technique. This comparison was made toward the pattern of modeling strategies by participants at different times and among participants in different locations to identify pattern similarities and differences in data as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). At the beginning of the analysis, the researcher used open coding, which involved assigning meaningful codes to the participants' responses. These codes were also compared to a table of modeling pattern themes obtained from the literature. Based on the literature review, the table provided these codes with a more significant meaning. The codes were compiled under specific categories and themes. The comparison between findings in the first phase and findings from the literature allowed the researcher to determine the gaps that were not explored during the first observation and interview.

To ensure data validity and reliability, upon completion of the theme construction process, the researcher obtained the value of the degree of consensus from three experts as external evaluators. The selected experts are individuals proficient in the fields of Islamic Education pedagogy, critical thinking in education, and qualitative research. All raters agreed on the

formation of themes and the provided excerpt examples, resulting in a Kappa consensus value of 0.91, which is considered very high (Stemler, 2001). Kappa value interpretation is also widely used in qualitative studies of Islamic Education (Wan Ali Akbar, Khadijah, and Mohd Isa, 2023). The details of expert consensus are shown in Table 2:

TABLE 2. Expert consensus Kappa value

EXPERT	INSTITUTION	POSITION	Level of Consensus (Kappa Value)	Overall Average Kappa Value
A	Selangor International Islamic University College	Rector, Prof. Dr.	0.91	
B	International Islamic University Malaysia	Associate Prof.	0.95	
				K=0.91
C	Islamic Science University of Malaysia	Senior Lecturer, Dr	0.86	

The researcher also conducted member checks with the study participants. This strategy was performed by validating the study participants on the transcript and verifying the researcher's interpretation of the summary of. meaning from the data obtained. The last strategy used by the researcher was peer review. This process was executed with fellow researchers who also conducted qualitative research at the doctoral level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, two main themes of modeling strategies were identified as being used by excellent Islamic Education teachers in their teaching:

1. Modeling through teaching techniques, and
2. Modeling through the teacher's overall behavior.

MODELING THROUGH TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Modeling as a teaching technique is implemented through the teacher's demonstration of explicit thinking steps while explaining the options available to students at each stage and the reasons behind their choices. For example, during argumentation activities, the IET demonstrates effective argumentation by supporting their statements with evidence from valid and reliable sources.

TEACHER AS A MODEL

During the teaching and learning process, when presenting information or providing examples to explain a concept, the IET often includes the sources of the information. For instance:

TABLE 3. Data on Teacher Providing References during Teaching Sessions

Teacher/Student	Dialogue	Notes
Teacher	"I have personally seen it with my own eyes, my senior at school, when he was performing silat in the arena, he could fly. Amazing! But once he stepped out of the arena, he couldn't [perform silat] anymore. Is this considered magic?" The teacher refers to the source of the story. (*Students remain silent and pay full attention*)	The teacher refers to the source of the story.
Teacher	"There are also Malay silat practitioners who are invulnerable. Like Silat Nasrul Haq, they can repeatedly stab their own thigh, yet there is no sign of any wound!"	
Student	"Did you personally witness that, Ustaz?"	The student demonstrates an investigative attitude, critically assessing consideration before accepting information

The findings indicate that the IET presents themselves as an example in the process of gathering information. In the teaching episode above, the student's question signifies that students have become accustomed to verifying the sources of stories or news being shared. Similarly, the IET referenced the information being conveyed, saying, "I also referred to an interpretation by scholars regarding this verse [related to *Sunnatullah*], which is about bringing a chick out of an egg and an egg from a chick. This is an example provided by the *Mufassirin* in this verse."

In addition, the IET also investigates by asking for the sources of information shared by students in class. In this teaching episode, the teacher praised the student and acknowledged the choice of reference sources used. Observation data showed that during a discussion session on the issue of using "*kinayah*" phrases in divorce, the following episode occurred:

TABLE 4. Data on Teacher Investigation on Student's Source of Information during Teaching Session

Teacher/Student	Dialogue	Notes
Teacher	Where did you get that information from, Humairah?	The teacher asks for the source of the information
Student A	I got that info from the national e-fatwa website, teacher.	The student states the source
Teacher	Well done, Humairah, for referring to that website!	The teacher praises the student's effort and acknowledges the student's source of reference."

In addition, when the class was conducted in the computer lab, the IET demonstrated the process of collecting information online. Through this, students can directly see certain authoritative websites referred to by their teacher on a specific debate topic. In classroom observations, "*Teacher responded, if the website is nonsensical, it can't be used. There are reliable websites to refer to, such as the Religious Council, the Fatwa Department, or websites owned by reputable ustaz like Ustaz Zaharuddin, Ustaz Kazim, or other recognized scholars whose knowledge is well- recognized.*" After the teacher showed specific websites to gather information on a particular issue, the students must then use the same method on their computers after being given a problem-solving topic in groups.

The IET also explained the criteria for selecting authoritative books in the effort to gather information for consideration. "*Teacher C explained, if we are confused, we can refer to book at which publisher or institution it's from. We need to ensure which publication the book is from because not all books in the market are correct! We need to be smart in choosing.*"

The observational data also shows that during teaching, the IET shared their difficulty in understanding the concept of *zihar*. "*I just discussed zihar with Ustaz Zul, and this concept is quite complicated to explain,*" due to the origin of *zihar,* which is tied to Arab culture and does not exist in Malaysia. This exposure benefits the students, helping them understand that even for a teacher, discussing and exchanging views with colleagues is normal when grappling with a challenging concept. IET's habit of guiding students in filtering, recognizing (or not recognizing) sources, stating references in conveying information, demonstrating the process of gathering information, and sharing how they obtain an understanding of information allows students to model the sources and methods commonly used by their teacher.

PEERS AS MODELS

Moreover, IET also selects certain students and actions as models to be emulated by other students in critical thinking. For example, the teacher responded to a student's answer, "*It's interesting how you put it that way! Let's reuse that sentence*." The teacher acknowledged and recognized the student's answer as having met a high standard in argumentation. However, it did not stop there; the teacher continued to request additional answers to further improve the previous student's argument. This was also acknowledged by Teacher B, "*Sometimes we identify students whose answers include good explanations and conclusions, so we call them to the front of the class to write their answers. Or they share their answers verbally, and we tell their classmates, this is an example of a good answer!*"

Furthermore, in teaching, research participants indicated that there are limitations in thinking about religion, especially when it comes to matters of the unseen (*ghaib*). Thus, the teacher demonstrates that there are questions or issues raised by students that receive the teacher's attention for further discussion, while other questions or issues may not be answered by the teacher, as seen in this teaching episode.

TABLE 5. Data on the Teacher Limiting Discussions on Unseen Matters during Teaching Session

Teacher/Student	Dialogue	Notes
Student	Is it true that when a rooster crows and a dog barks, it means they see something [unseen]?	
Teacher	How can we know if certain animals are related to jinn? Through the Quran and Hadith! If it's not mentioned, then it might be true, or it might not be.	The IET did not answer the student's question but posed another question.
	Such cases should stop being discussed because humans won't know without guidance from the Quran and Hadith, unless the students themselves can talk to birds to ask about the jinn they saw.	The IET justified the response.
	Bird, do you have any relation with jinn? Oh... it's my cousin!	The IET jokingly asked the bird about its relationship with jinn.
	(*All students laughed and nodded their heads*)	

In this case, the belief in the limitation of thinking was also touched upon by all teachers. The teachers viewed that in Islamic Education, there are matters where critical thinking can be applied to generate ideas, and there are matters beyond human comprehension. Thus, the teachers demonstrated this belief by modeling it, limiting discussions on questions of the unseen (*ghaibiyyat*). However, the teachers encouraged deeper student engagement on discussion topics that did not involve matters of the unseen in Islamic Education. These findings suggest that issues related to the unseen, which are not conveyed through revelation, are not suitable to be discussed in critical thinking activities.

MODELING THROUGH TEACHER'S OVERALL BEHAVIOR

The actions and words of teachers during teaching and learning sessions are always evaluated and interpreted by students in specific ways. This theme elaborates on the teacher's indirect modeling, where the study participants do not explicitly say, "imitate me." The theme portrays the teachers' general conduct as a model.

LISTENING TO STUDENT VIEWS

In this regard, the IET's modeling activities, which highlight attitudes, skills, and values as critical thinkers, can be seen through the teacher's open-mindedness during lessons, where the teacher listens attentively to the students' views or questions until the end. Triangulated data from students mentioned:

> "*I like Teacher C's teaching because when I or my friends share our opinions during class discussions, he listens attentively until we finish. He doesn't interrupt.*"

ALLOWING WAITING TIME

Additionally, during verbal questioning activities, the teacher was found to practice waiting time between asking a question and receiving an answer, as seen in the teacher's lesson on the topic of superstitions (*khurafat*).

TABLE 6. Waiting Time Range in a IET Teaching Episode

Teacher/Student	Dialogue	Waiting time	Notes
Teacher	Okay, what's the connection between the broken plate and Islam? (08:14)	29 minutes	A critical analysis question: asking for a connection.
Student	No answer. The presenting students discuss among themselves in low voices (08:43).		
Student	Student discussion continues (08:53).		
Teacher	Okay, what was it? So...what's the connection between the broken plate and Islam? (09:05).	9 minutes	Teacher regains class focus on the discussion issue.
Student	Islam doesn't teach that a broken plate indicates bad luck (09:14).		

This questioning phenomenon shows that the participants allowed a 29-minute waiting time before repeating the question. The question was specifically directed to a group of presenting students. The students were allowed to discuss among themselves regarding the question posed.

The teacher appeared calm, waiting in silence and not rushing for students' response. After repeating the question, the teacher still allowed a waiting time of 9 minutes before the students responded, making the total waiting time for the question 38 minutes. Based on the researcher's observation, when critical analysis questions were posed, the teacher gave ample time before seeking a response.

LISTENING TO OPPOSING ANSWERS

The teacher was found to listen to a variety of student answers, even those that were conflicting. Among the phrases the teacher used for this purpose were, "*Are there any other answers?*", "*What else, class?*" (P01:14), "*Is the conclusion Naim gave earlier enough?*" (P01:24), "*What else did you get?*" (P02:17), "*Other answers? Any other answers if there are?*" (P012:16), He looked at the other students and asked, "*Or is there another reason?*" (P03:15), and "*What other ways could they have done it?*" (P02:18).

ACCEPTING LOGICAL RESPONSES

Furthermore, the teacher was observed accepting any answer as long as it was logical. Observational data showed that Teacher C handled in-depth discussions by welcoming every idea brought up by the students, especially when related to general events in society. Data showed that the teacher accepted student responses regarding the historical origins of superstitions in the Malaysian context.

TABLE 7. Data on Teacher's Acceptance on Students' Answers in Discussion Activities

Taecher/Student	Dialogue	Notes
Teacher	How can believing in animals like birds bring luck or misfortune?	The teacher asked for a connection
Student A	In the olden days, people believed if a black cat crosses in front of us, something bad will happen. If it crosses behind, it's fine	
Student B	If a black cat crosses in front of a corpse, the corpse will come back to life.	
Teacher	This belief might be related to ancient Egyptian history, where they highly revered cats. If you've ever watched ancient Egyptian films, one of the historical landmarks, the Pyramid of the Sphinx, is surrounded by guards in the form of cats. It could be that we [the Malaysian society] adopted this belief and brought it into our country. So, what's the connection between this and Islamic teachings?	

The teacher was flexible in accepting any logical reasoning and, together with the students, made inferences based on known clues during the discussion. This overall display of behavior and critical attitude was indirectly modeled during every teaching session for the students to follow.

In conclusion, modeling activities are an important element for the IET in instilling critical thinking in students. The study participants modeled critical thinker characteristics through two methods: through teaching techniques and the overall display of behavior throughout Islamic Education lessons. Through teaching techniques, the teachers modeled critical thinking operations

in front of the students and elevated certain students as critical thinking models for others to emulate. Additionally, the teachers modeled personality traits, character, and behavior, encompassing overall actions and speech in front of the students.

DISCUSSION

Modeling gives students the opportunity to imitate the actions of teachers who are considered experts in critical thinking (Costa, 1991; Mulnix, 2012) within the field of Islamic Education. In this context, the modeling activities carried out by IET in an effort to instill critical thinking through teaching and learning eventually form a set of behavioral and attitudinal rules in the classroom indirectly. These rules become embedded in students without coercion to practice them. This is what is referred to as the teacher having the power to influence students' actions and shaping the classroom environment for learning (Fathizaki et. al., 2021).

This study found that critically-minded IET are essential for conducting successful modeling activities that instill critical thinking. Therefore, this study supports the Social Cognitive Theory (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010), where teachers carry out modeling practices as a scaffold for students to master critical thinking and, in turn, gain new understanding. Teachers also create opportunities for students to interact with peers, model processes through computer software, pose questions, and suggest additional information sources. All of these modeling activities as scaffolding are aimed at supporting and building students' understanding of the lesson.

Modeling highlights the teacher's role as a *muaddib* (educator) and *mursyid* (guide). When students can see and experience for themselves how the teacher applies critical thinking in the context of Islamic Education content, it becomes easier for them to emulate and apply it outside the classroom. This helps bridge the gap between theory and practice in the teachings of Islam, ultimately making Islam a practical way of life. These findings align with the views of Arifin and Adnan (2013) and Jamjoom (2010), who emphasize the role of teachers in convincing students to receive education positively.

In stimulating students' critical thinking, discussions on basic concepts should not stop at mere memorization but should be explored deeply in relation to the complexities of life outside the classroom. This provides students with a platform to practice making judgments. In this regard, IET models themselves as individuals who also delve into a concept by consulting experts, holding discussions, referring to authoritative sources, and so on. This study also found that IET's strategies involve three elements, as suggested by Wagner (2022): a) actions to observe, followed by b) explanations, and finally, c) providing opportunities for students to practice related processes. This aligns with the views of Aswati (2010) and Weinstein (1988), who stated that the experience of making judgments can serve as a mental model when facing new problems or issues that need to be resolved in life. Such teaching and learning processes are expected to help students gather as much information as possible for consideration before making decisions. The findings of this study also support a previous study by Faridah (2022) which shows that teachers who practice a culture of reflection tend to produce reflective students.

To stimulate students' critical attitudes, IET should encourage students to have an open mind by being willing to accept feedback and examine opposing arguments. This process involves developing the internal motivation of students to refer to more than one source of information. In the process of referring, teachers can can help students explore at least two opposing viewpoints. This enriches students' minds and makes them aware that many things around them can be

interpreted from multiple perspectives. Indirectly, this finding shows that teaching using only textbooks is not relevant for developing students' critical attitudes, consistent with studies by Nurul Asiah Fasehah Muhamad & Noornajihan Jaafar (2023), Ab. Halim (2015) and Smith (2014). If teachers do not expose students to opposing viewpoints in the classroom, the culture of judgment, labeling, and condemning those with differing views, as well as blind adherence, will become more widespread, resulting in further division among Muslims.

Uniquely, the study found that IET are sensitive to the limits of thinking within the concept of critical thinking modeled in the classroom. This is consistent with the objectives of teaching and the importance of fostering critical thinking held by IET, which is to ensure that students have a strong foundation in faith. For them, if students think without limits, they may easily go astray. In this regard, IET are seen to educate students to use critical thinking skills as a tool to achieve *taqwa* (God-consciousness). This finding aligns with the views of Mohd Zaidi Ismail (2018) and Naim Yasin (2012), who stated that belief in the limits of thinking is a sign of a believer and one who has *taqwa*. This is because it leads to a sense of humility and acceptance of the limitations of human intellect compared to the knowledge of the All-Knowing (al-Asyqar, 2010).

In general, IET respond cautiously and in a limited way to matters of the unseen (*ghaibiyyat*), while displaying openness and encouraging discussion on matters of *ijtihadi* (those open to interpretation). This finding is illustrated in Figure 2. All of this is within the framework of stimulating critical thinking according to the principles of *Shariah*.
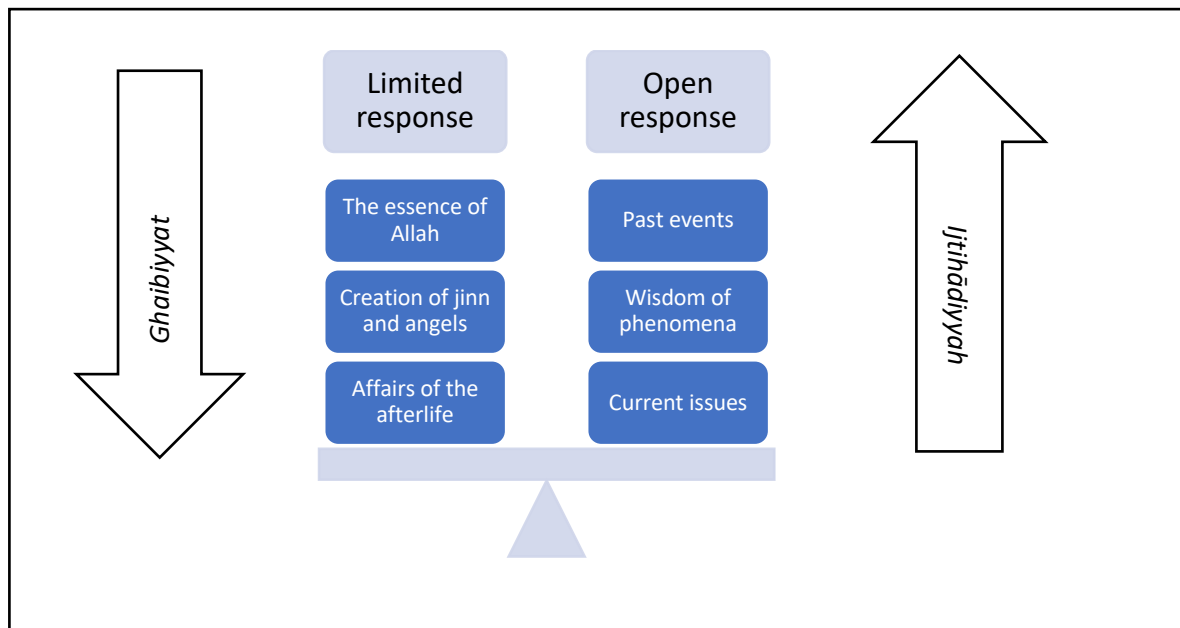

FIGURE 2. Teachers' strategies in demonstrating thinking limitation in religion
(Nursafra, 2017)

In summary, the modeling strategies in teaching critical thinking can be understood through the following figure:
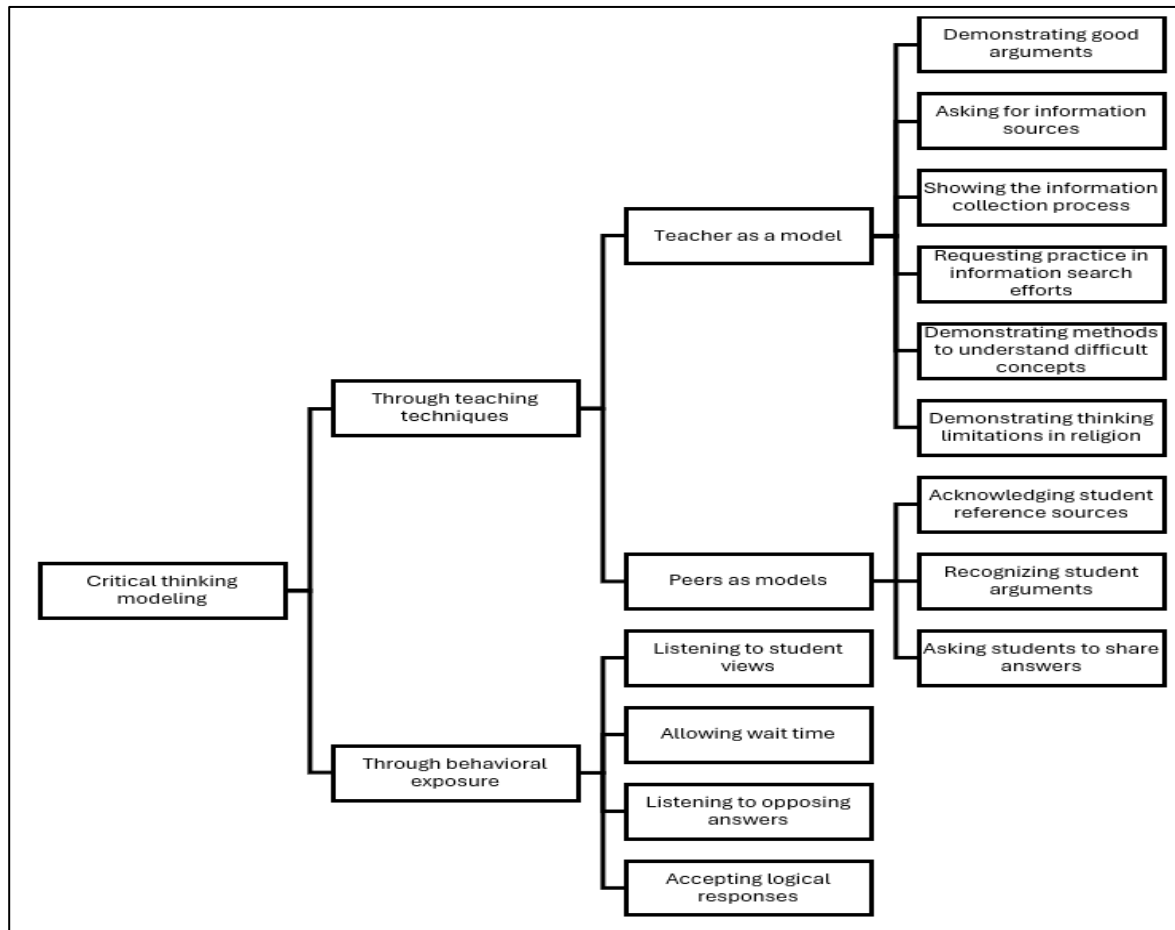

FIGURE 3. Conceptual model of modeling strategies in teaching critical thinking

CONCLUSION

The concept of modeling by IET in instilling critical thinking requires teachers to explicitly and implicitly integrate the application of thinking into their teaching practices routinely. This ongoing process helps students to be aware of their mastery of thinking skills and apply them within the framework of a Muslim's life.

IET should receive adequate training and courses specifically aimed at implementing pedagogy to stimulate students' critical thinking. This should go beyond just courses on high-level assessment items. This is because IET need to master pedagogical strategies and teaching delivery, such as instructional structuring and modeling, to be directly applied in teaching. Therefore, teacher training institutes and the Teacher Services and Training Division should increase the number of practical training and courses for both pre-service and in-service teachers specifically focused on teaching critical thinking. The effectiveness of these courses also needs to be prioritized.

As much as possible, IET should be mindful of their behavior inside and outside the classroom to ensure it aligns with the principles of a good thinker. IET's instructions and attitudes must be consistent. In other words, IET should strive to become critical thinkers themselves. This is because this study found that the transfer of values, attitudes, and critical thinking skills can occur through teachers modeling. Teachers also need to be skilled in creating a classroom environment that actively involves students in teaching and learning sessions. Through this, modeling by classmates can be effectively carried out. It is hoped that this study contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic Education teaching in the Malaysian and Muslim countries context.

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Nursafra Mohd Zhaffar (Corresponding author)
Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Negeri Sembilan Kampus Rembau,
71300 Rembau, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia
Email: nursafra@uitm.edu.my

Norwati Abu Bakar
Fakulti Pendidikan dan Sains Kemasyarakatan,
Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan,
Jalan Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha, Bandar Seri Begawan BA2111, Brunei Darussalam
Email: hjhnorwati@gmail.com

Nurul Asiah Fasehah Muhamad
Fakulti Pengajian Quran dan Sunnah,
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia,
71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia
Email: nurulasiahfasehah@usim.edu.my