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ISLAMIC AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES OF CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract:

Critical thinking (CT) has today gone beyond borders, beliefs, and disciplines. It is naturally connected to human nature as the quality of human life is determine by the quality of his thinking. Recent studies prove and common sense recognizes the need to embed the teaching of Critical thinking across the curriculum (Geertshuis & Albashiry, 2019). As valuable as this most important 21st century skills there is still growing misconception about its meaning, and applications moreover many consider Critical thinking as alien to Islamic teaching. This paper therefore, attempts to humbly give a substantive definition of Critical thinking from both the modern and Islamic perspectives, with particular reference to Paul Elder framework for Critical thinking and show the origin of critical thinking from the Islamic world view. It is quite troubling to find teachers of Islamic studies today not responsive to the contemporary global challenges (Nordin & Surajudeen, 2015; Rosnani, Suhailah, & Adesile, 2014; Sahin, 2018; Sciences et al., 2018). Islamic knowledge integration which is based on Tawhidic epistemology is increasingly attracting attention of intellectuals across the globe, especially as the prevalent view on critical thinking is mostly rooted from the modern secularistic system that emphasized on materialism and lead humanity to a narrow mindedness and focusing only to the things of the life here without given premium to the afterlife. Al-Qur'an being the compendium source that comprehensively contained all that human kind need to know about this life and the life hereafter, has left no stone unturned. Finding the Qur'anic perspective about thinking generally and Critical thinking particularly is not only relevant but indispensable. The knowledge of it will help in supplementing the limitations of the modern perspectives of critical thinking which give emphasis to the mundane while Islamic or Qur'an goes beyond that. Consequently, the authors attempt to analyse and discuss Critical thinking from the lens of Qur'an and show areas of similarities and differences between the modern and Quranic Paradigm with the hope that the humble efforts will clarify the much misconception on the

central position of CT from the Islamic perspectives, also to serve as reference material to both teachers and students of knowledge.

Keywords:

Thinking Styles, Critical Thinking, *Tauhidic* Epistemology, Paul Elder Framework For Critical Thinking, Al-Quran Perspective, 21st Century Skills

Introduction

Thinking is essential to human existence. Since his dignity, his merit and his whole duty is to think as he ought. That was what make him a thinking being uniquely created different from animals or plants. Though Pascal a contemporary of Rene Descartes opposes sole dependence on logic which he thought could not determine major truths. Since the heart has its reasons which reason does not know, in other words, both Pascal and Descart recognize reason as primary source of knowledge but they disagree about the competence of Man (Serrat, 2014). Thinking is seen as mental activity that helps solve a problem, answer question, make decision, or fulfil a need to understand something. Today's world earmarked skills that are needed for surviving the 21st century quantum of changes that demand for response. The skills identified for surviving the 21st century world, the world that is aptly described by (Ramli,Ibrahim,&Yusof, 2018) as borderless world which has demanded the product of a community equipped with 21st century Knowledge and skills. These skills are the skills of Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and communication known as the 4cs of education 4.0. The focus of this paper is to elaborately discuss on critical thinking skills from the modern and Islamic point of views. Recent studies suggest the need for redesigning policies, and high tech culture and new strategies for nations to sustain their economy since the 21st Century world is based on Knowledge driven economy that can be generated from discovery and innovation which is in their view the essential factor that determine the success of educational system (Ramli, et al 2018) as concrete as the assertion seems to be, it can rather cause more harm than good if the system of education does not integrate a holistic approach by discarding dualistic system of education which caused polar opposite generation in some countries. This article therefore, make a clarion call for integrating more pristine system of education that can facilitate a balance society. This system of education is uniquely Islamic epistemological system which uses eclectic approach. The approach of merging the scientifically attested findings with divinely revealed ideas contend in Allah's words *Al-Qur'an*. This can yield a generation that are passionate and productive in matters of this world and the next world (*aakhirah*), this system of education can produce a complete and balanced man (*insaanul kamil*) (Alkoutli, 2018; Mazwati, Yusoff, Hashim, Khalid, & Hussien, 2018; Sciences et al., 2018)

Thinking Styles from Islamic and Western Perspectives

Islam, through its primary source, presents various styles of thinking that relate to critical and creative thinking. These styles include:

- i. Intuitive thinking style (Q.9:96, 28:7),
- ii. scientific thinking style as in (Q. 41: 11, 21:30-33)
- iii. Rational thinking Style (Q. 21:22, 23:91),
- iv. Perceptual Thinking Style (Q. 2:216, 49:13)
- v. Positive Thinking Style (Q.12:87, 3:154)
- vi. Analogical thinking Style(Q. 25:39, 14:24-25)
- vii. Inquisitive Thinking style (Q.2:28, 255)

Western Thinking Style

There are various thinking skills based on the western perspectives these include:

- i. Lateral thinking Style
- ii. Creative Thinking style
- iii. Analytical Thinking Style
- iv. Constructive Thinking Style
- v. Pragmatic thinking style
- vi. Mathematic thinking Style
- vii. Critical Thinking style

Most of the thinking styles stated above are similar to both Islamic and Western views, with only a few types that differ with each other for more information refer to a coursebook edited by Hisham M. TakyEldin Kandil published by USIM press. For the purpose of this research, Critical Thinking style will be buttressed thus:

Concept of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is considered a toolkit for surviving the riotous trials of the digital age. It has no single and universally accepted definition (Hosu, 2015; Toner & Moran, 2016). This lack of unanimity in defining critical thinking is a result of the varying perceptions from which fields such as philosophical and psychological standpoints about critical thinking. Philosophers have inclined to stress the nature and quality of the effects of critical thinking, for instance, the analysis of arguments. Psychologists, on the other hand, focus on the idea of 'thinking skills' and have determined on the course of cognition, the elements, and processes used to address educational and practical subjects (Ritter & Mostert, 2017).

Furthermore, developmental and cognitive psychologists concern about empirical research, while philosophy is based on hypothesizing and logical intellectual to reach conclusions. In this manner, both disciplines have different views about critical thinking. The following show a few examples of definitions from philosophical and psychological point of views:

- i. According to Ennis & Ennis (2009) Critical thinking (CT) refers to 'reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do.'
- ii. CT is further viewed as dynamic, persistent and cautious reflection of any belief or invented form of knowledge based on the point of view that support it and the supplementary conclusions to which it tends . . . [it] includes conscious and intentional effort to institute belief upon firm foundation of proof and prudence. (Williams, 2017, Sciences et al., 2018)
- iii. Facion (1990) A consensus of expert definition understood Critical thinking as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, categorical, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based".
- iv. More so, Critical thinking is seen as 'a distinctive kind of focused thinking in which the thinker analytically and consistently induces criteria and intellectual standards upon the thinking, taking responsibility of constructing thinking, controlling the construction of the thinking in line to the standards, evaluating the effectiveness of the thinking based on the purpose, the criteria, and the standards.(Ku, Lee, & Ellis, 2017a; Paul, 2005a)

Psychological Perception of Critical Thinking includes:

v. Another author defines CT as 'vigorous method encompassing the denotable number of mental processes such as induction, reasoning, deduction, classification sequencing, and definition of associations' (Brizuela & Earnest, 2017)).

vi. CT also means "the broadening of proof following proof that bridge up gaps in the evidence" (Bartlett, 1985, (Bridges, 2017)

vii. It is viewed also as 'an active and systematic attempt to understand and evaluate arguments' (Mayer & Goodchild, 1990, p. 4);

viii. Ericson and Hastie view CT as 'a sequence of internal symbolic activities that leads to novel, productive ideas or conclusions' (Ericson & Hastie, 1994, p. 38)

Critical thinking urges individuals to mould their views and thoughts with optimism rather than merely reiterating others' points of view, which can be done through studying opinions from diverse angles with rationally consistent claims (Steve Higgins, 2015)). According to Bell & Loon (2015) and Abrami et al. 2008), the body of knowledge is satisfied with how critical thinking plays a fundamental role for students.

Elements of Critical Thinking

Elements or skills are activities one develops to the point of competence, and those that are vital for thinking critically are numerous and varied. They are diverse because studies have shown that there is no unanimity regarding elements or skills agreed upon; it seemingly every scholar who is dealing with critical thinking, has their own treasured. For example, Benjamin bloom and Peter Facione as reported by identified six (6) skills each Viz: Knowledge, Comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, (DeWaelche, 2015), (Facione, 2020) considers self-regulatory judgment, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, as well as explanation as the components of Critical thinking (Facione, 1990). In contrast, (Ku, Lee, & Ellis, 2017b; Paul, 2005b) enumerated eight Elements of thought which capture how critical thinking examines, analyzes, and reflects on intellectual work. These eight Elements lead to eight categories of questions present, to some degree, in all critical thinking: (1) what is the **purpose**? (2) what is the **Point of View**? (3) what are the **Assumptions**? (4) what are the **Implications**? (5) what **information** is needed? (6) what **Inferences** are being made (*Almulakhas*)? (7) what is the most **fundamental Concept**? (*Albaalu/Maana*) and (8) what is the **question** that is being answered? (*Aljawab/Annateaja*).

These "elements" often "overlap," E.g., the "purpose" or "goal" in our reasoning might be to form a belief or to get what we desire, need, or value utilizing an action *Anniyya*. This will also be our "point of view," as someone who has that "goal" (61); albeit Paul also characterizes one's (*Al-imanu/fahmu*) "point of view" as (*Azzannu*) one's personal stock (*Alhukm*) of beliefs, desires, and values (79) or the genre of subject matter one is reasoning about, (*Almawbduu/Albayaan*) e.g., religion or mathematics (82), or one's "conceptualization" (68) of information. But confusions and equivocations about the "elements" of reasoning are not as problematic as Paul's recommendations regarding assessing and evaluating how these elements of reasoning are employed. One must have "intellectual standards" when reason.

The reviewed elements of reasoning, the brainchild of Paul Elder, identifies the eight skills in their verb form, that thinkers encounter while working with Knowledge (Ku et al., 2017b). These skills, therefore, were used in this research paper as a basis for identifying the skills appropriate for higher-order thinking. See figure 1 below:

Purpose	What am I trying to achieve or make happen?
Question at Issue	What is the central question I am trying to think through?
Information	What facts, data, or evidence do I need to figure things out?
Concepts	What are the organizing ideas, theories, or principles that influence my thinking?
Assumptions	What am I taking for granted that forms the basis of my thinking?
Interpretation	What are the connections I am making, and conclusions or solutions I am coming to?
Implications	What are the consequences that follow from my line of thinking?
Points of View	What are the other relevant perspectives that I need to consider?

Critical Thinking Components from Al-Quran Perspective

The critical thinking component proposed by western scholars has long been expressed in the Al-Quran since the 14th century. Allah has shown some critical elements of thinking through the Al-Quran verses.

Purpose

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with thought): "Our Lord! Not for naught have you created (all) this! Glory to Allah! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire." (Surah Ali 'Imran 3: 190-191).

This verse illustrates that people who think will observe Allah's creation by using their hearts, and then they will see the power of Allah. To feel this, humans need to be intentionally purposeful with faithful *niyya* as a way of setting a goal for thinking about creations is to see the greatness of Allah.

Question at Issue

During the Jahiliyya era, Quraysh use to ask about many issues bordering their minds, such as stance on gambling, Wine, Menstrual blood, Allah, for example, in the Qur'an 26:23 Pharaoh said And what is this Lord of all creation? Here the details that Prophet Musa AS went to Pharaoh as Messenger of Allah, who sent to Pharaoh and his people, were omitted only the conversation that took place was related. This question indicated that Pharaoh was challenged with the command to release Israelites, so he asked arrogantly, "who is this Master and ruler of all creation that send such a command to the King of Egypt through an ordinary subject of his kingdom?" Moses Answered: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them, if only you care to believe! That is, "I have not being sent by any mortal king ruling in the world, but In come from Him Who is the Owner of the heavens and the earth. If you believe that there is a Creator and Master and Ruler of this Universe, it should not be difficult for you to understand who is the Lord of all Creation," Pharaoh said to those around him, "Do you hear?" Moses said, "Your Lord, as well as Lord of Your forefathers who has gone before" close examination of the above conversation, revealed how Pharaoh attempted to distract the attention of his people and riddle Moses (A.S) but, Moses remain focused on the question at issue. Queries of similar nature numerous in the Qur'an that were revealed more than 14 hundred years ago.

Information/Analysis

The analysis is one of an essential element for critical thinkers Qur'an right from the onset discourages blind imitation or taking information devoid of verifiable evidence. Any news brought to a person he needs to ascertain the story; otherwise, he may make a wrong judgment or harming an innocent soul ignorantly. Sura Hujurat Chapter 49 verse 6 "Believers, when an ungodly person brings you a piece of news, carefully ascertain its truth, lest you should hurt a people unwittingly and thereafter repent at what you did."

Consequently, the Qur'an (7: 179) has explicitly condemned some group of Men and jinns for their negligence of not using their faculties of reasoning to understand the realities of things. The verse states: "*Many are Jinns and men we have made for hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning)*". (Surah al-A'raf 7:179).

Concept

"Then ask them: Are the blind and the seeing alike? Do you not then reflect?" (Surah Al-An'am 6:50). "The example of the two parties is that one is blind and deaf, and the other capable of seeing and hearing. Can the two be equals? Will you, then, not heed? (Surah Hud 11:24).

Two verses of Al-Quran above are examples that emphasize the element of conceptual synthesizes the concepts of a blind differentiate between the two groups of people who are blind and literate in surah Al-An'am verses 50 and the disbelievers and believers in surah Hud 11:24. Comparing and differentiating skills is one of the critical thinking skills (Ramli, 2018).

Judging Reason

Islam encourages us to think deeply. By thinking, people can stay away from accepting opinions without a valid argument, believing in the superstition that prevents the truth, punishing without checking and prejudice. Furthermore, providing evidence during the argument process was emphasized, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah 2:258, states, "*Have you not consider the case of the person who had an argument with Abraham as to whom Acknowledged as his Lord? The dispute arose because Allah had given him the Kinship, (which had made him arrogant). When he says Abraham said "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death" he answered, I give life and cause death, Then Abraham said "Well Allah brings the Sun from the east just fetch it from the West, " At this, the disbeliever was confounded (yet he did not believe) for Allah does not show guidance to unjust people.*

It is evident from the above quotation that the skill of judging the rationality of a claim is a significant element in the Divine book of Allah. The verse shows how the Prophet of Allah Abraham silences a cruel ruler. Similarly, Q.2: 111 debunked the claim of the Jews as the only deserving people for Paradise, Allah condemned them by exposing their bizarre tendencies and challenge to produce their evidence to prove their claim.

Assumption

They say: "None shall enter the Garden unless he is a Jew or (according to the Christians), a Christian." These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are speaking the truth." (Al-Baqarah 2:111)

A closer look in the above verse Allah SWT exposed the selfish motives of the Jews when they claimed supremacy and deserved occupant of Paradise and term it as wishful thinking; this is

a mere hypothetical statement that has no strong base. In Islamic critical thinking, conjecture has no place other than blatant lie and a Sin; hence Allah warns against in on chapter 49: verse.

Generally, Western inclined critical thinking fashioned by their intellectuals is not strange to Islam because Al Qur'an pronounced that since the 14th-century era. The gap between the two opposing views is basically from the philosophical underpinning of each paradigm—critical thinking components of both Islam and Western concepts. While Islam considers Al Qur'an as an essential source of critical thinking, the latter depends on conjectures coming from rational/reasoning faculties, which is in contrast to revelation. An Islamic CTS focus on strengthening faith in Allah as the deeper and deeply rooted once belief, the more likely to have an unshakeable trust in Allah in all situations (ease or unease).

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper is content analysis and document analysis, Critical thinking related theories, contributions and findings, Quranic apps were used as literature source for English meaning of *Qur'anic* verses on critical thinking. Books such as Creative Thinking and Problem Solving edited by Hisham M Taky Eldin Kandil was used together with many articles written on Islamic critical thinking skills as referenced. Modern sources such as (Ennis & Ennis, 2009; Facione, 2011; Machouche & Bensaid, 2015; Nimulola, 2018; Nordin & Surajudeen, 2015; Paul, 2005b; Shulman, 2010) used in synthesizing the views of both western and Islamic scholars about critical thinking.

The Islamic Critical Thinking and Ijtihad

Critical thinking is essential in Islam (Idha et al., 2018) nothing can be more Islamic than critical thinking because the very sentence that can warrant a person to be a Muslim, (*Kalimatussahada*) require a skill in critical thinking which enables one to decide to ban all deities and affirm Allah as the only one worthy of worship in the heaven above and the earth below, Lailaha ill-Allah (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah).

Ijtihad derived from the Arabic word *juhd*, which means "efforts or endeavour in performing an activity." The term is used mainly in such occasions where hardship and efforts are involved. Example qur'an chapter 9 verse 79 "Arab may say According to Imam Ghazali (a philosopher of Islamic golden age), ijtihad means to expand once capacity in a particular matter and use it to the utmost. Some scholars have defined it as a means of expanding to the fullest capacity by the mujtahid in seeking the knowledge of sharia. The perfect definition of ijtihad would mean that one has spent so much effort in pursuit of the understanding of sharia that further objective is humanly impossible this cause Our decline does not lie elsewhere; it lies on us because we ceased to be dynamic as the Quran wanted us to be. Muslims became static and began to rest on our laurels. The Quran called on us to engage in a continuous struggle. While we began to think that we had reached the limit and began to rest intellectually, while others were marching on.

Critical Thinking through Al-Quran Perspective

Critical thinking skills have been viewed as a significant component of educational outcomes (Siheh, Razali, & Razali, 2017), according to (Hamdan et al., 2014), quality teaching aids, such as e-Quran, could help to enhance the process of teaching and learning. Education to human life is imperative; when humans are denied education, they cannot read and perhaps can't have knowledge either formal or informal (Ramli, 2018). While attitude and critical thinking skills are always synonymous with those, who read, think, and have vast knowledge. Besides this

first revelation, the verses in the Al-Quran repeatedly emphasize thinking activities, using common sense to listen, see, understand, evaluate, take lessons and making decisions as mention in Surah Ar-Ruum 30:8, which ask on people to think about what they have done to themselves, Surah Al-Ankabut 29:20 encourage people to travel on this earth to see and appreciate Allah's creation and Surah Yusuf 12:101 that calls upon people to observe and think about the creation of sky and earth that prove the power of Allah SWT. Although the teachings in the form of scientific principles are not directly expressed in the Al-Quran, the verses contained in Al-Quran become the source of ideas and guidance to scientific studies such as a quote from surah Yunus 10: 5 that gives an idea about the concept of calculating the year and month by referring to the movement of the moon. Consequently, Muslims are invigorated to do ijihad since Islamic studies focus on producing critical thinkers with fear of Allah and serve their responsibilities as vicegerent of Allah Almighty (Aziziah Ramli, Hasniza Ibrahim, Mohd Yusof, & Surif, 2018; Sulphey, 2019)

Conclusion

The overarching finding of this paper is its success in showing the views of critical thinking from the western and Islamic perspectives. It shows the efficacy of the Qur'an as the underpinning base for developing Critical thinking Skills. It discusses on thinking styles, critical thinking elements and specifically highlighted the Islamic critical thinking which allows a Qur'anic generation with a built-in Qur'anic mind who are conscious and obedient servants of Allah Almighty, courageous and exceptional in useful ideas and imaginative heart. Al-Quran moulds minds that are thoughtful aside faithfulness. Humility, humbleness, integrity are few of the praiseworthy attributes of this kind of Qur'anic personality whose hopes and aspirations depend on Allah Almighty solely. The paper identified Islamic Epistemological Integration as a paradigm for surviving the 21st Century era of borderless challenges. This system combines both western and Islamic worldviews as congruent with the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet SAW. By and large, the paper proved that Al-Quran contains and discussed the essentiality of the elements of critical thinking Skills and recommends the need for Policymakers, curriculum developers to embed in the educational policies an integrated curriculum with naqli and aqli base. This can facilitate the process of producing quality citizens or individuals who can think critically about the many *aayaat of the Qur'an* (verses of the Qur'an) because a competent student or teacher is he that can analyse, proof, process quantum of information, not the one who only memorise information without understanding the content.

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