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Principles and practices of learning assessment from an islamic perspective

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Abstract. *Assessment is an essential component of the educational process that serves to measure students' achievement, development, and potential comprehensively. From an Islamic perspective, assessment is not merely intended to determine the level of knowledge acquisition but also functions as a mechanism for holistic human development encompassing intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions. This paper aims to discuss the fundamental principles of assessment according to Islam and their implications for assessment practices in contemporary education. A document analysis approach was employed by examining primary Islamic sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as scholarly works on Islamic educational assessment. Findings indicate that Islamic assessment is founded upon several key principles, including justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), transparency, equity, validity, reliability, and assessment oriented toward character development and holistic human growth. Furthermore, Islamic assessment emphasizes self-reflection (muhasabah) and continuous evaluation aimed at self-improvement rather than merely judging individual performance. Assessment should also consider students' diverse abilities and be conducted free from prejudice and discrimination. The discussion highlights the relevance of integrating Islamic principles into modern assessment systems to nurture learners who excel academically while possessing exemplary character and moral integrity. This paper contributes to strengthening the philosophical and practical foundations of a more holistic, ethical, and value-based assessment system capable of addressing the challenges of twenty-first-century education.*

Keywords: Learning assessment, Islamic education, justice, self-reflection, human development, holistic assessment

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a crucial element of the educational system that functions to collect, interpret, and utilize information to determine students' learning achievements and developmental progress. In contemporary education, assessment is not only used to measure academic performance but also serves as a mechanism for improving learning quality through continuous feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2017). Nevertheless, modern assessment systems are frequently criticized for placing excessive emphasis on cognitive achievement while neglecting students' moral, ethical, and character development (Azizi Yahaya et al., 2011).

From an Islamic perspective, education is a holistic process of human development encompassing physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions to produce balanced individuals who are conscious of and devoted to Allah SWT (Al-Attas, 1980; Al-Abrashi, 1975). Consequently, assessment in Islam is not limited to measuring knowledge acquisition but also evaluates moral conduct, faith, practice, and individuals' responsibilities toward Allah SWT and society (Langgulung, 1987). This approach is aligned with the objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the development of insan kamil (the complete human being) capable of integrating knowledge, faith, and righteous action in daily life (Al-Attas, 1980).

The concept of assessment in Islam has strong foundations in both the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Qur'an explains that human life itself is a test intended to evaluate faith, patience, and obedience to Allah SWT. In Surah Al-Mulk (67:2), Allah states that He created death and life to test humankind as to which of them is best in deeds. Similarly, Surah Al-Baqarah (2:155) explains that human beings will be tested through various challenges to assess their faith and perseverance. These verses indicate that assessment is part of the divine order (sunnatullah) governing human existence (Al-Qaradawi, 1995).

Islam also emphasizes the principles of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and transparency in all evaluation processes. These principles are essential for ensuring that assessment decisions are objective, accurate, and free from favoritism or prejudice (Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2011). In educational contexts, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as assessors responsible for evaluating students fairly according to their abilities and efforts (Hashim, 2004). Therefore, assessment in Islam should satisfy the requirements of validity, reliability, and fairness while adhering to Islamic ethical and legal principles.

In the twenty-first century, issues such as examination pressure, achievement-oriented assessment, assessment injustice, and mechanistic measurement approaches have increasingly attracted attention (Birenbaum et al., 2015). These concerns call for a more holistic assessment approach centered on human development. Islamic assessment principles offer a valuable foundation for developing assessment systems that not only measure academic achievement but also cultivate values, morality, and integrity among learners (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

Accordingly, this paper aims to discuss the fundamental principles of assessment from an Islamic perspective and examine their implications for contemporary learning assessment practices. It is hoped that this discussion will contribute to the development of more holistic, fair, and ethical assessment systems aligned with the aspirations of Islamic education and the demands of twenty-first-century learning.

METHOD

This study employed a conceptual paper approach based on document analysis and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to explore the concepts and principles of learning assessment from an Islamic perspective. The literature review followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and examined primary Islamic sources, including the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the works of prominent Islamic scholars such as Al-Attas, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Khaldun.

Additionally, journal articles, academic books, and scholarly documents related to educational assessment and Islamic education were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and MyJurnal databases. Keywords used in the literature search included Islamic assessment, ta'dib, tarbiah, muhasabah, malakah, and maqasid al-shariah.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify major themes associated with Islamic assessment. The analysis process involved categorization, comparison, and synthesis of concepts extracted from the literature. Four major themes emerged and subsequently formed the foundation of the Integrated Islamic Assessment Model (TTMM), namely:

1. Ta'dib (Al-Attas)
2. Tarbiah and Muhasabah (Al-Ghazali)
3. Malakah (Ibn Khaldun)
4. Maqasid al-Shariah

These themes were integrated with Islamic assessment principles such as justice, trustworthiness, transparency, equity, validity, and reliability to establish a holistic conceptual framework oriented toward human development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Principles of Learning Assessment in Islam

Justice (Al-'Adl)

Justice constitutes the primary foundation of assessment in Islam. The Qur'an emphasizes that all judgments should be made fairly and without influence from personal interests or

prejudice (Surah An-Nisa', 4:58). According to Al-Attas (1980), justice in education means placing things in their proper position according to rights, abilities, and responsibilities. In assessment, justice requires students to be evaluated based on their actual performance using appropriate and unbiased instruments.

Trustworthiness (Amanah)

The principle of amanah refers to the moral and spiritual responsibility borne by teachers as assessors. Al-Ghazali (1993) emphasized that educators must perform their duties honestly because every trust will ultimately be accountable before Allah SWT. In assessment, amanah involves designing quality instruments, accurate scoring, and truthful reporting of results.

Transparency

Transparency means that assessment criteria, procedures, and standards are clearly communicated and understood by all stakeholders. In Islam, transparency is closely linked to the concepts of sidq (truthfulness) and tabayyun (verification based on evidence). Transparency enhances students' confidence in the fairness of the assessment system.

Equity

Islam recognizes the equal dignity of all human beings regardless of ethnicity, lineage, or social status. In education, equity ensures that all students have equal opportunities to demonstrate their potential. Assessment should therefore avoid discrimination and provide fair opportunities for all learners.

Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment instrument measures what it is intended to measure. From an Islamic perspective, validity encompasses not only technical accuracy but also moral truthfulness. Valid assessment instruments should produce accurate results while preserving learners' dignity and integrity.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of assessment outcomes when the same instrument is administered under similar conditions. In Islam, consistency and accuracy are closely related to the principles of justice and trustworthiness. Reliable assessment safeguards students' rights by ensuring stable and dependable evaluation outcomes.

Character Development and Human Growth

The primary objective of Islamic education is the development of morally upright and God-conscious individuals (Al-Attas, 1980). Consequently, assessment should extend beyond academic achievement to include morality, values, intentions (niyyah), and behavior.

Muhasabah and Continuous Assessment

Muhasabah refers to continuous self-evaluation aimed at personal improvement. It is deeply rooted in Islamic educational traditions and aligns closely with formative assessment, self-assessment, and ongoing feedback practices in modern education.

Recognition of Individual Differences

Islam acknowledges diversity in human abilities, as reflected in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:286), which states that Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Therefore, assessment should accommodate individual differences in abilities, interests, experiences, and learning styles through multiple assessment methods such as portfolios, projects, presentations, observations, and written examinations.

The principles of Islamic assessment can be categorized into three interrelated dimensions:

1. Ethical Dimension

- Justice (Al-'Adl)
- Trustworthiness (Amanah)
- Transparency
- Equity

2. Psychometric Dimension

- Validity
- Reliability

3. Tarbiah Dimension

- Character Development
- Muhasabah (Self-Reflection)
- Recognition of Individual Differences

Together, these dimensions establish a holistic assessment framework that not only ensures measurement accuracy but also promotes human development based on Islamic values and the objectives of Shariah (Maqasid al-Shariah).

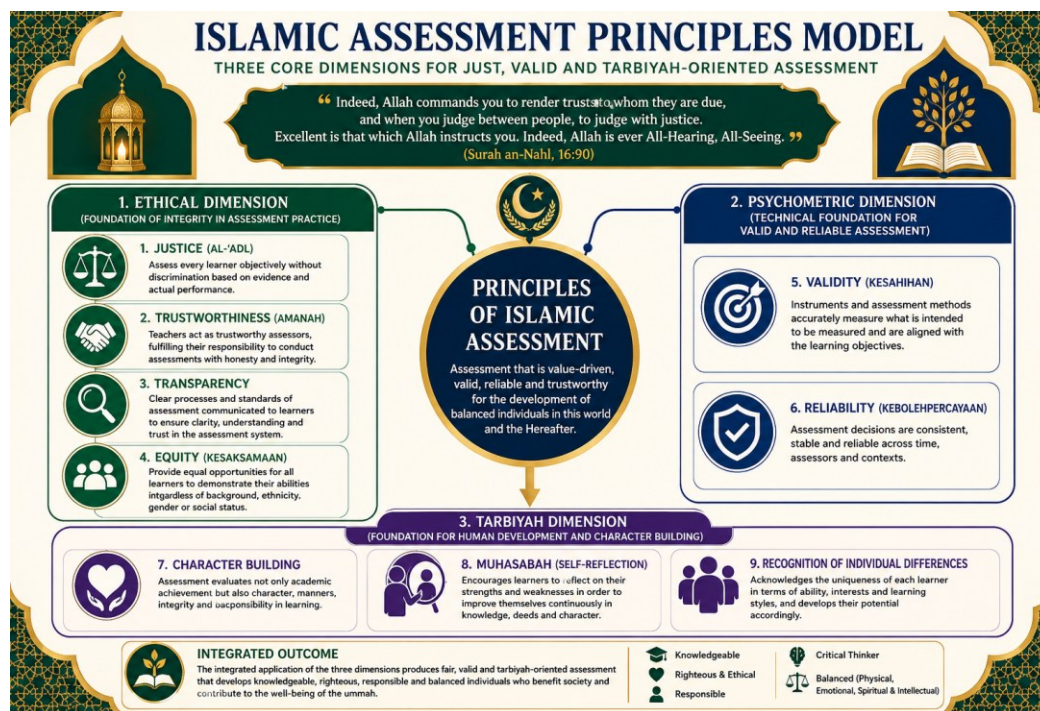


Figure 1. Islamic Assessment Principles Model

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Ethical Dimension

The ethical dimension promotes fair, transparent, and unbiased assessment practices. Research indicates that students’ perceptions of fairness positively influence motivation, engagement, and learning satisfaction (Brookhart, 2013; Tierney, 2014).

Psychometric Dimension

Validity and reliability enhance the quality and accuracy of assessment information. High-quality assessments enable educators to make more informed instructional decisions and improve learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009).

Tarbiah Dimension

The tarbiah dimension transforms assessment into a tool for character formation and personal growth. Formative assessment and quality feedback significantly improve student learning and achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

This perspective also redefines the role of teachers from score providers to mentors and murabbi responsible for nurturing students’ intellectual and moral development.

CONCLUSION

Assessment from an Islamic perspective extends beyond measuring academic achievement and functions as a comprehensive mechanism for human development grounded in Islamic values. Al-Attas emphasizes the formation of adab through ta'dib, Al-Ghazali highlights assessment as a process of tarbiah and muhasabah, while Ibn Khaldun focuses on the development of malakah through continuous practice and experience. These principles are further reinforced by the objectives of Shariah (Maqasid al-Shariah), which serve as the ultimate purpose of Islamic education.

Therefore, an assessment system founded upon these principles has the potential to produce individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally upright, socially responsible, and capable of contributing positively to society. Such an approach offers a meaningful framework for addressing the educational challenges of the twenty-first century while remaining faithful to the holistic vision of Islamic education.

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