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Reconciling the Empirical and the Divine: Islamic Epistemology as a Critical Lens for Positivist Teacher Assessment in Indonesia

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Keywords

Positivism, Islamic Epistemology,
Pedagogical Assessment, Teacher
Performance, Indonesian
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Abstract

This paper explores the complex interplay between positivism, Islamic epistemology, pedagogical assessment, and teacher performance within Indonesia's contemporary educational landscape. Drawing on a thorough philosophical analysis of positivism—from its foundational principles established by Auguste Comte to its modern interpretations and critiques—this study integrates these perspectives with the rich intellectual tradition of Islamic epistemology. By synthesizing these frameworks alongside empirical evidence from Indonesia, the paper offers a more comprehensive and contextually authentic understanding. It examines how positivist approaches have influenced pedagogical assessment methodologies while also considering how Islamic principles, embedded within the national philosophy of Pancasila and local values, provide a critical alternative and complement. Furthermore, the study assesses the implications of these intertwined approaches for fostering Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as redefined within an Islamic framework. Through a synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, this paper aims to provide insights into optimizing teacher performance assessment to promote a more holistic, effective, and values-based educational system in Indonesia. Visual elements—including a diagram illustrating the conceptual framework, an image depicting an Indonesian classroom, and a comparative table of paradigms—are incorporated to enhance understanding and offer a multifaceted perspective.

Introduction

Education, at its core, is a transformative endeavor aimed at cultivating knowledge, skills, critical thinking, and adaptive capacities within individuals (Supratama, Ramadani, & Fadilah, 2024). In the Indonesian context, this transformative mission is deeply intertwined with the nation's Islamic identity and its philosophical foundation, Pancasila. The Qur'an elevates the status of those who possess and impart knowledge, stating: "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees" (QS. Al-Mujadilah: 11). This verse underscores the immense responsibility and honor associated with the teaching profession in the Islamic worldview.

The effectiveness of any educational system depends significantly on the quality and performance of its educators. In Indonesia, teachers are not merely instructors; they are expected to serve as moral guides (*murabbi*), professional facilitators (*mu'allim*), and role models (*qudwah hasanah*) who nurture the next generation with professionalism, a strong work ethic, and services grounded in structured scientific knowledge, professional authority, and an ethical code. This comprehensive responsibility aims to cultivate well-rounded student character (*akhlakul karimah*) (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Consequently, a robust framework for evaluating teacher performance is essential—one that can objectively assess pedagogical competence while also capturing the spiritual and moral dimensions integral to the Indonesian educational ethos.

Historically, the field of education, particularly its assessment methodologies, has been profoundly influenced by philosophical paradigms. Among these, positivism stands out as a dominant force. Originating from the philosophical insights of Auguste Comte, positivism advocates applying scientific and empirical methods to acquire knowledge, asserting that only verifiable facts derived from sensory experience constitute authentic knowledge (Simuziya, 2022). This philosophical stance has permeated various domains, including education, where it has often translated into an emphasis on measurable outcomes, standardized assessments, and objective data collection.

However, to fully understand the Indonesian educational landscape, one cannot overlook the profound influence of Islamic epistemology, which posits a dual source of knowledge: revelation (*naql*) and reason (*'aql*). This framework, deeply embedded in the lives of the majority of Indonesians and reflected in the first principle of Pancasila ("Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa"), provides a critical lens through which positivistic approaches are adopted, adapted, and sometimes challenged. For instance, the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 outlines teacher competencies encompassing personality, pedagogical, social, and professional aspects, many of which extend beyond easily quantifiable metrics (Rukajat, Gusniar, Abas, Nurkhalizah, & Bachruddin, 2024).

This paper aims to critically examine the concept of positivism as it relates to pedagogical competence and teacher performance assessment in Indonesia, explicitly incorporating the often-overlooked dimension of Islamic epistemology. It explores how positivist theories and Islamic principles analyze and influence teacher effectiveness by integrating contemporary philosophical perspectives with empirical experiences from the Indonesian educational context. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how multiple philosophical paradigms shape

educational practices and how these practices can be optimized to enhance the quality of education in a manner that is both scientifically rigorous and spiritually enriching.

Theoretical Foundations: A Philosophical Inquiry into Education

To critically analyze the interplay of these paradigms in Indonesian education, it is essential to first establish a robust theoretical foundation. This section will explore the core tenets of positivism, examine its critiques, and then present Islamic epistemology as a comprehensive alternative framework, culminating in a direct comparison of their educational philosophies.

The Genesis and Evolution of Positivism

Positivism, as a philosophical movement, asserts that all genuine knowledge is derived exclusively from sensory experience and its logical and mathematical analysis. This epistemological position maintains that only empirical observations, verifiable through scientific methods, can produce authentic knowledge, thereby rejecting metaphysical and a priori speculations as non-scientific (Guta, 2021). The intellectual founder of positivism is widely recognized as Auguste Comte (1798–1857), whose philosophy is characterized by the of Three Stages Theological, Metaphysical, and Positive (Fedorov, 2023). For Comte, the final Positive Stage signifies the triumph of empiricism and rational inquiry, where knowledge is obtained solely through observation, experimentation, and the formulation of invariant laws, abandoning all theological and metaphysical speculation.

The early 20th century witnessed the emergence of logical positivism with the Vienna Circle. This movement aimed to establish a more rigorous foundation for scientific knowledge by integrating empiricism with modern logic, with the Verifiability Principle as its cornerstone. This principle asserts that for a statement to be cognitively meaningful, it must be susceptible to empirical verification (de Alencar, Oliveira, Sampaio, Rego, & Nunes, 2024). Consequently, this led to a staunch rejection of metaphysics, relegating questions about ultimate reality to the realm of the meaningless (Quilty-Dunn, Porot, & Mandelbaum, 2023).

Despite its ambitious goals, logical positivism faced considerable criticism. Its strict verifiability principle was challenged for being overly restrictive and self-referentially paradoxical. Furthermore, the notion of a completely value-free science was increasingly questioned, as researchers' subjective biases and theoretical commitments were recognized as inevitably influencing the research process (Hoyningen-Huene, 2023). These critiques paved the way for post-positivism, which acknowledges an objective reality but recognizes that our understanding of it is always imperfect and theory-laden (Musa & Aldiabat, 2024).

A Critical Alternative: Islamic Epistemology

While positivism and its successors represent a dominant Western trajectory, Islamic civilization offers a distinct and time-tested epistemological framework. Islamic epistemology is not merely a rejection of reason or observation; rather, it is a holistic system that integrates reason ('aql) and revelation (naql) into a harmonious whole. Knowledge ('ilm) in Islam is considered a sacred trust, and its pursuit is regarded as an act of worship. The Qur'an presents itself as the ultimate source of certain knowledge: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 2). This establishes naql as the foundation upon which all other knowledge is built and interpreted.

The primary sources of knowledge in Islam are:

Revelation (*Naql*): The Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is considered the ultimate, certain source of truth, providing guidance on matters of faith, morality, and the purpose of life.

Reason (*'Aql*): Human intellect, observation, and rational inquiry. The Qur'an repeatedly commands believers to contemplate, reflect (*tadabbur*), and use their faculties of reason to understand the world. "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding" (QS. Al-'Imran: 190). This verse directly links empirical observation to spiritual reflection.

The relationship between *naql* and *'aql* is hierarchical and complementary. *'Aql* is the tool to understand, interpret, and implement the truths of *naql*. It is also the means to explore the natural world (*ayat-ayat kauniyah* or signs of God in the universe), which leads to a greater appreciation of the Creator's majesty. This framework was operationalized through a sophisticated methodology developed by classical Islamic jurists and scholars, including *Ijtihad* (qualified independent reasoning), *Ijma* (consensus of qualified scholars), and *Qiyas* (analogical reasoning). This integrated methodology stands in stark contrast to the narrow empiricism of positivism. It embraces metaphysics as the highest form of knowledge, rejects the myth of a value-free science, and grounds all inquiry within a theistic worldview. The ultimate unifying principle of this epistemology is **Tawhid** (the Oneness of God), which integrates all branches of knowledge under a single, coherent metaphysical reality, preventing the fragmentation that often plagues modern, positivistic disciplines. The ultimate purpose of this pursuit of knowledge is not just for worldly gain but for the fulfillment of life's very purpose: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (QS. Adh-Dhariyat: 56). Thus, all learning, whether in science or religion, is ultimately a means to know and worship God.

A Philosophical Inquiry into Education: Comparing Telos, Roles, and Truth

To understand the practical implications of these two epistemological frameworks, we must compare their answers to the fundamental questions in the philosophy of education: What is the purpose of education (*telos*)? What is the nature of the teacher and student? And what is considered "truth" that must be assessed?

The Purpose of Education (*Telos*)

Positivist Perspective: The purpose of education is implicitly to create efficient, productive, and functional citizens. Education is viewed as a tool for economic growth and social stability. Its focus is on developing measurable skills and factual knowledge useful in the job market. This is a functionalist view that often neglects the spiritual and moral development of students.

Islamic Perspective: The purpose of education is much higher and more holistic: to form the *Insan Kamil* (the complete human). This is a balanced individual—as an *'abid* (an obedient servant of Allah), a *khalifah* (God's vicegerent on earth who prospers it), and a well-mannered member of society. This purpose encompasses integrated intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social development. This process is often described by three concepts: *ta'lim* (the process of knowledge

transfer), *tarbiyah* (the process of nurturing and soul growth), and *ta'dib* (the process of cultivating etiquette and noble character). The Qur'an emphasizes the perfection of His creation as inspiration: "He has created you and formed you and perfected your forms" (QS. Al-Insan: 4), meaning education must strive to achieve this balanced perfection.

The Nature of the Teacher and Student

Positivist Perspective: The student is often seen as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) or an information-processing system that needs to be filled with correct data. The teacher is a technician, a facilitator of knowledge transfer, or an operator of a pre-designed system. The relationship is primarily transactional and centered on content delivery.

Islamic Perspective: The student is a being born in a state of *fitrah* (a natural disposition to know God), possessing inherent dignity and potential. The teacher is a *murabbi* (a nurturer of souls), a *mu'allim* (a teacher of knowledge), and, most importantly, a *qudwah hasanah* (a good role model). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the ultimate example: "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern" (QS. Al-Ahzab: 21). The teacher-student relationship is transformative, filled with compassion (*rahmah*), and spiritually responsible. This responsibility is so great that it is described as a trust rejected by the universe: "Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant" (QS. Al-Ahzab: 72).

The Concept of Truth and Assessment

Positivist Perspective: Truth is objective, verifiable, and corresponds to observable reality. Assessment is about measuring the extent to which a student's knowledge aligns with this objective truth. Therefore, assessment tends to be quantitative, standardized, and focused on observable outcomes.

Islamic Perspective: Truth (*Haqq*) is manifold. It includes empirical truth, but also transcendent truth revealed by God. Therefore, assessment cannot merely measure factual recall. It must also assess a student's understanding of their life's purpose, their moral development (*akhlak*), and their ability to apply knowledge in a way that brings good and blessings. This directly critiques the reductionist model of positivistic assessment. The Qur'an affirms the comprehensiveness of His guidance: "...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things..." (QS. An-Nahl: 89). Assessment in Islam must also reflect this clarity and completeness.

This philosophical comparison reveals that the tension between positivism and Islamic epistemology is not merely a methodological difference but a fundamental divergence in the ultimate vision of education itself. This is a crucial point that underpins the entire analysis in this study.

Conceptual Framework: A Triadic Interaction

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that visualizes the dynamic interplay between three core elements: Positivism, Islamic Epistemology, and the Indonesian Educational Context, all converging on Pedagogical Assessment and Teacher Performance.

Method

As illustrated in Positivism and Islamic Epistemology are not presented as mutually exclusive binaries. Instead, they are two powerful, often competing, philosophical forces that shape the methodologies of pedagogical assessment. The Indonesian Educational Context, with Pancasila as its philosophical umbrella and local wisdom as its diverse expression, acts as the mediating ground where these forces interact, adapt, and are synthesized. The assessment outcomes, in turn, provide feedback that refines both the assessment practices and our understanding of how these philosophies operate in reality. This framework moves beyond a simple West vs. Islam dichotomy to a more nuanced model of interaction and adaptation.

This study is underpinned by an analytical qualitative approach, a methodological framework selected for its capacity to facilitate a deep, nuanced exploration of the complex and multifaceted interplay between philosophical principles (positivism, post-positivism, and Islamic epistemology) and the lived realities of pedagogical assessment (Matta, 2022). This approach prioritizes analytical depth, enabling a critical examination of how abstract philosophical constructs manifest in, and are shaped by, the specific socio-cultural and religious context of Indonesian education.

The analysis is further enriched by an *tafsir* (interpretive) approach, wherein data are not only viewed empirically but are also interpreted through the lens of Islamic principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This means that when a teacher describes a challenge, it is analyzed not just as a pedagogical problem, but also as a spiritual and ethical one, potentially relating it to concepts like *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), or the moral weight of being a *qudwah hasanah*. In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews: A purposively selected cohort of 30 participants was interviewed, including 15 teachers and 5 school administrators from public/secular schools, and 7 teachers and 3 administrators (*kyai* or *ustadz*) from *madrasah* and *pesantren*. This allowed for the elicitation of detailed narratives and personal interpretations of assessment practices from diverse perspectives. Sustained Naturalistic Observation: The research team conducted over 60 hours of classroom observations in 6 different schools (3 public, 3 Islamic) across two provinces. This involved observing classroom interactions, teaching methods, and assessment procedures in action, capturing the enacted practices beyond reported accounts. Critical Document Analysis: A wide range of documents was analyzed, including national curriculum documents, specific *madrasah* curriculum guidelines, teacher assessment portfolios, and school-level policy documents. The analytical process employed a thematic analysis strategy, yet was driven by a critical and philosophical lens aligned with the study's aim. The subsequent analytical phase involved a higher-order conceptual analysis where these patterns were critically interrogated and juxtaposed against the core tenets of positivism, post-positivism, and Islamic epistemology. For example, a theme of "teaching to the test" was analyzed through a positivistic lens (as a rational response to standardized testing) and an Islamic lens (as a potential neglect of the holistic development of the student's soul and character). This dialectical process allowed for the identification of points of convergence, tension, and adaptation. To ensure methodological rigor and epistemological credibility, the study adhered to the cornerstone principles of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the research sites, peer debriefing, and member-checking procedures. Transferability was facilitated

by the provision of thick, descriptive data. Dependability and Confirmability were ensured by maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

Teacher Identity: The Tension Between Professional Compliance and Spiritual Calling

A dominant theme across all interviews was the tension teachers felt between their identity as state-recognized professionals and their calling as educators with a deeper moral or spiritual mission. Public school teachers often expressed a sense of being "pulled in two directions." On one hand, they were pressured to comply with positivistic assessment regimes focused on quantifiable metrics: student test scores, administrative paperwork completion, and adherence to standardized lesson plan formats. As one public high school teacher noted:

"My performance review is all about numbers. How many students passed the exam? Did I submit my portfolio on time? It feels like I'm an accountant, not a shaper of young minds. I know my students need more than just test-taking skills, but the system doesn't reward me for that."

This statement reflects the dehumanizing potential of a rigidly positivistic system, where the complex art of teaching is reduced to a set of measurable outputs (Neophytou, 2025). In contrast, teachers in *pesantren* and *madrasah* articulated a more integrated identity. Their performance was evaluated by the community and their leaders based on a more holistic set of criteria, including their own piety, their ability to inspire students, and their effectiveness in transmitting Islamic values. An *ustadz* in a *pesantren* explained: "My 'assessment' happens every day. The *kyai* sees how I interact with students, parents see if their children are becoming more polite and diligent. It's not about a form; it's about whether I am a good example (*qudwah*). Of course, we also have to worry about national exams for our *madrasah* students, so we have to find a balance." This highlights the dual system operating in Indonesia, where Islamic educators must navigate both the positivistic demands of the state and the holistic, character-focused expectations of their religious communities. This duality creates a unique space where post-positivist adaptations naturally occur, as teachers pragmatically blend competing demands.

Assessment in Practice: A Tale of Two Systems

The empirical findings revealed a stark contrast between assessment models. In public schools, pedagogical assessment was heavily standardized, using digital platforms and checklists to track compliance with curriculum pacing and administrative tasks. The entire process was designed for objectivity and comparability, reflecting a classic positivistic approach. The "personality" and "social" competencies from the national law were often reduced to simplistic Likert-scale items, a

method that trivializes complex character traits. In contrast, *madrasah* and *pesantren* operated a parallel system. Assessment of religious subjects was qualitative and oral (e.g., listening to Qur'an recitation and correcting *tajwid*). Teacher performance was assessed through direct observation, peer feedback, and, most importantly, the perceived spiritual and moral development of the students. A key metric was the "amanah" (trustworthiness) of the teacher, a concept that has no equivalent in a positivistic framework. This approach embodies an Islamic epistemological assessment, where the goal is not just knowledge acquisition but spiritual formation (*tarbiyah*).

The Role of Pancasila and Post-Positivism in Harmonizing Frameworks

The findings revealed that Pancasila, particularly its first principle, "Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa" (Belief in the One and Only God), serves as a crucial philosophical bridge. It provides the constitutional legitimacy for Islamic values to inform the national education system, thereby challenging the secular premise of classical positivism. School leaders often invoked Pancasila to justify the integration of religious activities into the school schedule, even if these activities were not directly "measured" in formal teacher assessments. This reflects a post-positivist reality where the ideal of a value-free, purely objective system is recognized as unworkable and undesirable in the Indonesian context. Instead, a more pragmatic, context-sensitive approach emerges. As one school principal explained: "We have to follow the government's rules on assessment, that's non-negotiable. But Pancasila gives us the freedom to add our own 'spice'. We assess our teachers on how they build student character, how they collaborate with parents, and how they contribute to the school's religious life. We don't put this in the official report, but we value it internally. It's our way of being both Indonesian and faithful." This pragmatic synthesis is a form of indigenous post-positivism, acknowledging the limits of a single paradigm and creating a hybrid model that serves local needs. The revised conceptual framework (Figure 2) reflects this dynamic interaction.

A Comparative Analysis of Paradigms in Practice

The empirical findings from this study align with and further illuminate the theoretical distinctions between the paradigms. The following table, adapted from the theoretical framework, now includes examples from the research findings.

Table 1. A Comparative Overview of Paradigms in Educational Research and Practice

Feature	Positivism (Public School)	Post-Positivism (Principal's View)	Islamic Epistemology (<i>Pesantren</i>)
Ontology	Reality is test scores, compliance data.	Reality is complex; includes both data and values.	Reality is created by God; includes seen and unseen.
Epistemology	Knowledge is from test results, checklists.	Knowledge is co-created through dialogue & context.	Knowledge is from revelation, reason, & community.
Axiology	Assessment is (supposedly) neutral and objective.	Assessor acknowledges values (e.g., national character).	Assessment is value-driven; aims to form <i>akhlak</i> .
Methodology	Quantitative checklists, online quizzes, standardized tests.	Mixed methods; adds qualitative observations.	Oral tests, observation of character, community feedback.
Purpose	To rank, reward, and control teachers.	To understand and improve teaching holistically.	To nurture the whole person (<i>insan kamil</i>).
Truth Criteria	Verification through high scores.	Triangulation of data sources.	Coherence with Qur'an, Sunnah, and community values.
Generalization	What works here works everywhere (best practices).	Findings are transferable to similar contexts.	Principles are universal, application is contextual.
Educational Focus	Measurable outcomes, standardized assessment.	Holistic understanding, critical thinking.	Holistic development (<i>insan kamil</i>), <i>ta'lim</i> , <i>tarbiyah</i> , <i>ta'dib</i> .

Implications for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesian Education

The emphasis on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) is a cornerstone of modern educational reform. However, the definition and implementation of HOTS can be profoundly enriched when viewed through an Islamic lens, moving beyond the secular confines of a purely positivistic approach.

Redefining HOTS: From Critical Thinking to Contemplative Thinking

In a purely positivistic framework, HOTS is often limited to critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity within a secular context. An Islamic framework, however, redefines and expands HOTS to include spiritual and contemplative dimensions:

- Tafakkur: Deep contemplation of God's creation to understand His power and wisdom.
- Tadabbur: Reflection on the meanings of the Qur'an to derive guidance for life.
- Ijtihad: Qualified independent reasoning to solve novel problems by applying Islamic principles.

This redefined HOTS connects empirical knowledge to its divine source, thereby transforming learning into an act of worship (*'ibadah*). The goal is not just a smart student, but a wise and righteous one. The Qur'an itself is presented as a text meant for deep reflection, not just recitation: "[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses..." (QS. Sad: 29).

Practical Examples and Assessment Design

To illustrate this, consider how HOTS can be fostered in different subjects. In Biology, instead of only asking students to analyze ecosystem data, an Islamic-informed HOTS approach would ask them to reflect on the concept of *mizan* (balance) as a sign of God's perfection (QS. Ar-Rahman: 7-9) and then ask: "How does our understanding of *mizan* inform our responsibility as stewards (*khalifah*) of the Earth?"

Assessing this enriched version of HOTS requires moving beyond standardized tests. It necessitates performance-based assessments, portfolios, and rubrics that explicitly include criteria for spiritual reflection, ethical reasoning, and the ability to connect knowledge to Islamic values (Hidayah, Hanifiyah, & Fauzi, 2025). The rubric component shown in the previous longer version of this article exemplifies how the rigor of positivism (in creating clear, measurable criteria) can be combined with the holistic vision of Islamic education to assess a more complete form of student learning.

Future Directions and Recommendations

To enhance the efficacy of pedagogical assessment and teacher performance evaluation in Indonesia, several future directions emerge, informed by the dialogue between positivism, post-positivism, and Islamic epistemology. Developing an Integrated Islamic-Positivist Assessment Framework Future national and school-level assessment policies should be designed to measure both empirically observable competencies and spiritual/moral development. This could involve creating validated qualitative scales for assessing character traits like honesty (*sidq*) and

responsibility (*amanah*), alongside traditional pedagogical metrics, and systematically integrating methods like *mutaba'ah* (self-monitoring journals) into teacher portfolios.

Context-Sensitive and Value-Driven Assessment

Indonesia's vast diversity requires assessment frameworks that incorporate local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) and community-specific pedagogical practices. More importantly, these frameworks must be explicitly value-driven, reflecting the principles of Pancasila and Islamic teachings. This involves engaging not just educators, but also community leaders and religious scholars (*ulama*) in the design and validation of assessment tools.

Emphasizing Formative Assessment for Spiritual and Professional Growth

The purpose of assessment must shift from being purely summative (for accountability or promotion) to a more formative function aimed at continuous professional and spiritual development. Feedback for teachers should not only be about pedagogical techniques but also about their role as *murabbi*. Training for assessors must include developing skills to provide constructive feedback on character and spiritual guidance.

Redesigning HOTS Assessment through an Islamic Lens

Curriculum and assessment designers at the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs must collaborate to create tasks and national exam questions that evaluate Islamic-informed HOTS. This includes designing inquiry-based learning activities that lead to *tafakkur*, debates on contemporary ethical issues from an Islamic perspective, and projects that require students to apply their knowledge to serve the community (*khidmah*).

Conclusions

This paper has examined the complex relationship between positivism, Islamic epistemology, and pedagogical assessment in Indonesia. We have traced the philosophical lineage of positivism and identified its inherent limitations when applied to a context where faith and spirituality are integral to the educational mission. By introducing Islamic epistemology as a critical and complementary framework, and by conducting a detailed comparative study of their educational philosophies, we have argued for a more holistic and authentic understanding of teacher performance and assessment in Indonesia.

The empirical findings from this study reveal that Indonesian educators are not passive recipients of a single, monolithic philosophy. Instead, they actively navigate, negotiate, and synthesize competing demands. They live out the tension between the positivistic pressure for quantifiable compliance and the Islamic calling for holistic nurturing. The national philosophy of

Pancasila, particularly its first principle, provides a unique platform to harmonize these seemingly disparate paradigms, creating a pragmatic, post-positivist reality on the ground. The empirical realities in *madrasah* and *pesantren* serve as living laboratories where assessment models that prioritize character, morality, and spiritual development are practiced and refined, offering valuable lessons for the entire educational system.

The implications for fostering Higher Order Thinking Skills are profound. By redefining HOTS to include contemplation, reflection, and ethical reasoning grounded in Islamic values, Indonesian education can produce not just critical thinkers, but also righteous and responsible individuals who use their knowledge for the betterment of humanity and as a form of worship. This requires a fundamental shift in how we design curricula and, most importantly, how we assess both teacher and student performance.

The journey forward requires a conscious and deliberate effort to integrate the strengths of empirical rigor with the profound wisdom of Islamic epistemology. It calls for an "indigenization" of educational assessment that is authentically Indonesian. By doing so, Indonesia can forge an educational system that is not only globally competitive but also deeply rooted in its spiritual and cultural identity, capable of nurturing a generation that is intellectually sharp, spiritually grounded, and committed to building a more just and compassionate world. This balanced approach, informed by a rich dialogue between faith and reason, holds the key to unlocking the true potential of Indonesian education and realizing the vision of creating a truly *insan kamil*—a complete and balanced human being. The ultimate goal is to create a society where the pursuit of knowledge, as the Qur'an encourages, leads to both worldly success and divine grace: "...And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'" (QS. Thaha: 114).

Limitations of the Study and Avenues for Future Research

This study, while providing an in-depth qualitative exploration, is not without limitations. The purposive sampling of a small number of schools in only two provinces means that the findings are not statistically generalizable to all of Indonesia. The vast diversity of the nation means that experiences in other regions, particularly those with non-Muslim majorities, would likely yield different insights.

Future research could build upon this study in several ways:

1. **Large-Scale Quantitative Studies:** Developing and administering a survey to a larger, more representative sample of teachers across Indonesia to quantitatively measure their attitudes toward different assessment paradigms.
2. **Comparative International Studies:** Comparing the Indonesian experience of integrating religious values into state assessment with other countries with similar contexts, such as Malaysia or Turkey.
3. **Longitudinal Studies:** Tracking a cohort of teachers over several years to see how their assessment philosophies and practices evolve in response to policy changes and professional development.
4. **Student-Centered Research:** Focusing specifically on how students perceive and experience these different assessment models, and how it impacts their learning, motivation, and spiritual development.

By pursuing these avenues, researchers can continue to build a more robust and nuanced

understanding of the complex interplay between philosophy, policy, and practice in one of the world's most vibrant and challenging educational landscapes.

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