INTELLECTUAL SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE IN AKHLAQ DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The works on the interpretation of Al-Quran dating from the beginning of the sixth century of the hijrah or the thirteenth century (AD) is replete with commentaries related to the perfection of two intellectual intelligences which are theoretical intelligence and practical intelligence in the pursuit of contentment in the world and the hereafter through akhlaq development. This incentive raises questions regarding the relationship between the two intelligences and the development of akhlaq from the Islamic perspective. Adopting the document review approach, this study aims at explaining the role of the two intelligences pertaining akhlaq development in a more practical manner by referring to the Islamic philosophical thinking circulated during the abovementioned period. The findings identified a model of spiritual intellectual intelligence that explains the relationship between different intelligences from the Islamic perspective. The model concludes that sound akhlaq conjectures are the impact of certain positive motivations resulting from the process of imagination or repetitive thinking in applying certain Islamic knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, Allah has bestowed favor upon the believers by sending the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a mercy to mankind. Among his mission besides establishing the unity of God is the perfection of noble character. Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: I have only been sent (by Allah) to perfect noble characters. According to Al-Munaawi (2012), akhlaq virtue in the hadith

above refers to three types of virtue: religious virtue, worldly virtue, and virtue in the afterlife. In a different hadith, Prophet Muhammad SAW enlightened the position of sound akhlaq in the afterlife with his words:

"The things that mainly cause people to enter paradise are revering Allah and noble characters" (Narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ibnu Majah). Although the gift of paradise is founded on Allah's benevolence, Al-Mubarakfuri (2000) asserted that it is one's devotion and noble character that ultimately earns one a place in paradise. Regarding worldly welfare, Al-Razi (2012) in his work, *Mafatih al-Ghayb* or *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, postulated that there are three types of worldly contentment. First, contentment stemming from a good spirituality; second, contentment that originates from a good physique; and lastly, contentment resulting from a healthy social and physical surrounding. He placed spiritual contentment on the highest hierarchy, the achievement of which is through the perfection of two types of intellectual intelligence, namely theoretical intelligence (*al-quwwah al-ilmiyyah*) and practical intelligence (*al-quwwah al-'amaliyah*); followed by physical contentment, through the gift of health and beauty; and lastly is the external contentment, through the possession of property and position. While the perfection of the theoretical intelligence is with faith and the perfection of intellectual intelligence is with devotion and righteous deeds. This notion can be observed from various commentaries of the Qur'an over the years. Al-Razi (2012) for instance, articulated the relationship between these two intellectual intelligences with faith and devotion in many places of his commentaries including; verses 201 & 285:2 Al-Baqarah; verse 113 & 114 and verse 159:3 Ali Imran; verse 35 & verse 114:5 Al -Nisa'; verse 69:6 Al-Maidah; verses 81 & 82 of surah Al -An'am; verse 5 of surah Al -Taubah; verse 9 and verse 62 & 63 of Surah Yunus; verse 52 of Surah Ibrahim; verse 2 of surah al-Nahl; verse 83:26 al-Shu'araa'; verse 25:57 Al -Hadid; verse 21:67 Al -Mulk; verse 4:68 Al -Qalam; verse 28:78 Al -Naba'; verses 37 & 38:79 Al -Naazi'aat and verses 14 & 15:87 Al -A'la. Amongst them is his commentary on verse 285:2 Al -Baqarah, mentioning:

> "Truly the perfection of men is to recognize the essence of Allah SWT and conceding deeds to be practiced with, to perfect theoretical intelligence with knowledge and practical intelligence with good deeds. Indeed, intellectual intelligence is more noble than practical intelligence. The Quran is abounding with indications to both, which mandate that theoretical intelligence is superior to practical intelligence...,thus, His decree: "Every one of them believed in God, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers and we make no distinction between any of His messengers" is rather a signal to the perfection of intellectual intelligence with this noble knowledge, and He continued: "And they say, "We hear and obey" is a signal to the perfection of the practical intelligence of humanity with this perfect noble practice. Anyone who stands on this fact perceives that the Quran beholds profound confidences that many do not know" (Al-Razi, 2012).

The same connotation can also be observed from Ibn Taymiyah (2010), in al-Fatawa al-Kubra when he said:

> "Truly the perfection of men is worshiping Allah through knowledge and charity as commanded by Him. They are Allah's servants, they are the believers and amongst the pious, they are Allah's objects who are amongst the successful and Allah's victorious soldiers. They are experts in beneficial knowledge and convictions; and they are the ones who purify themselves by perfecting theoretical intelligence and practical motivational intelligence."

Likewise, with Ibn Qayyim (2013), among of his work, in Al-Fawaid he mentioned:

> "His absolute contentment depends on the perfection of both his erudite and willful intelligences. The culmination of intellectual intelligence is to know one's Creator, His names and traits, the path to Him, the challenges bestowed upon oneself, as well as one's frailties. With these five knowledge, a person can reach the pinnacle of his intellectual intelligence, one that can only be achieved by reveling Allah's rights over the servant, fulfilling them sincerely, truthfully, perfectly, courtesy, submissively, and witnessing Allah's grace to him, witnessing his own oblivion in fulfilling those rights, ashamed to face Allah with the knowledge that his deeds are

inadequate from what they should be and there is no hope except with His mercy.... Then neither the perfection of men nor his contentment will be complete without these."

There are two pillars of ideas to emphasize from the exposition above. First, the assertion that akhlaq is the reason for gaining prosperity in the hereafter, and second, the notion that worldly prosperity relates to spiritual contentment based on religion in theory and practice. Al-Munawi's interpretation on the hadith mentioned above in relation to this, suggests that realizing true virtue in the hereafter is highly reliant on attaining worldly virtue, which is produced by achieving religious virtue. As akhlaq virtue in the context of worldly life is directly associated to worldly virtue, worldly virtue is linked to religious virtue, and conversely, religious virtue is linked to intellectual intelligence, the question thus, is how intellectual spiritual intelligence can influence akhlaq through the perfection of religious virtue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive qualitative method based on document review. This is achieved by referring to the writings of previous scholars in the field of Islamic philosophy related to akhlaq development produced around the twelfth century (AD) an after. Data collected within the scope of the study were analyzed using a content analysis approach.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to explain practically the relationship between spiritual, intellectual and bestial intelligence and the process of akhlaq development from the perspective of Islamic philosophy, as recognized by Islamic scholars that focus on three research questions.

1.   What is perceived as intellectual spiritual intelligence from the Islamic perspective?

2.   What is the relationship between intellectual intelligence and akhlaq development?

3.   How does intellectual intelligence affect the development of akhlaq through faith and righteous deeds approach?

THE CONCEPT OF INTELLECTUAL SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Based on the narration of Ibn Abbas, there are three parts to every person: the soul, the body, and the spirit. This is identical to his interpretation of verse 42 of surah Al-Zumar cited by Imam al-Suyuti regarding the phenomena of death while sleeping, when he stated.:

"Allah fully takes away the souls in their sleep and leaves the spirit in the body and its cavity, moving and living. If Allah wills it, He will take the soul, and it will die. If Allah wants to delay his death, Allah will return the soul to its place in the body cavity (al-Suyuti, 1983).

This theory separates human beings into a spiritual and material realm. The human soul denotes the spiritual aspect, whereas the body denotes the physical aspect. Al-Razi (2012) used the terms spiritual contentment and psychological contentment interchangeably to refer to the same concept. From the Islamic spiritual perspective, the emphasis of the human psyche over the physical component corresponds with the essence of mankind. This is because the human soul (*al-nafs*) is the true human being or essence, and it originates in the realm of malakut or the realm of al-amri, which houses the intelligible (*ma'qulat*) matters (Al-Ghazali, 1988, 2013). In relation to that, theoretical spiritual intelligence and practical spiritual intelligence are also known as human intelligence, the intelligence that makes humans dissimilar from other visceral beings (Al-Ghazali, 1988). With that intelligence, the human soul has the ability to prosper in its cognitive function of thinking and in this context, it is known as the mind (*al-aql*) (Al-Ghazali, 1988 & 2013; Al-Syahrastani, 2018) and both intelligences are termed intellectual intelligence (*al-quwwah al-aqliah*) (Al-Iiji, 1997).

The ability to discern universal images (al-kulliyah) that exist solely in the mind and are devoid of any physical components and also the ability to judge them as true or false (Al-Iji, 1997), is referred to as theoretical intellectual spiritual intelligence (Al-Ghazali, 1988; Al-Syahrastani, 2018). As such, if an image is derived from a sensory source (al-mahsus), the material properties of the image that dictate its distinctiveness (*lawahiq gharibah*), in terms of; how much, how, where, and what context, will be eliminated first through the process of abstraction (*al-tajrid*).

There are four stages of abstraction before any sensory image is composed into a universal image. First, at the stage of sensory perception (*idrak al-hiss*) by the where the real live of reality is separated out from the sensory images, which is by only perceiving the image with the presence of the recorded reality; second stage is through imagery perception (*idrak al-khayal*), where the reality is fully separated out from sensory images and storing them to allow re-perceived without the presence of reality; third stage is estimative perception (*idrak al-wahm*) where the material properties is separated out from sensory images by perceiving the specific meaning of the image; and the fourth stage is mind perception (idrak al-aql) where the general meaning is generated form specific meaning (al-Ghazali, 1988). So, the more general the perceived image, the closer it will be to the human soul.

While practical intellectual spiritual intelligence refers to the power that propels the human body to undertake certain activities as a result of its interaction with specific psychological intelligence variables, which is either to bestial appetitive power (*al-quwwah al-haiwaniah al-nuzu'iyyah*), imaginary power or bestial imagery estimative power (*al-quwwah al-haiwaniayyah al-mutawahhimah al-khayaliyyah*) or to himself that is his intellect.

His relationship with bestial motivation creates emotional responses such as disappointment, embarrassment, laughter, and tears; while his interaction with imagination develops specific life skills; and his interaction with himself, which is to adopt theories from intellectual intelligence, will give rise to life's values and laws (al -Ghazali, 1988; al-Syahrastani, 2018; al-Iiji, 1997). Practical intelligence, in addition to the intellectual intelligence of the human soul, interacts with other psychological components of the human spiritual dimension. Scholars asserted that in addition to the human soul, there is also a bestial soul (nafs hayawaniah) and a vegetative soul (*nafs nabatiah*), each of which has its own intelligence (al-Iiji, 1997; al-Ghazali, 1988 & 2013; al-Syahrastani, 2018). While the human soul dominates the cognitive aspect of humans, the bestial soul dominates the affective aspect with two faculties of intelligence, namely the concupiscible faculty (*quwwah syahwah*) and the irascible faculty (*quwwah ghadab*), as well as mastering the aspect of movement.

However, as spiritual contentment can only be experienced when the human soul dominates the bestial soul by directing it with akhlaq virtue and positive emotional awareness, spiritual contentment can only be attained through the enhancement of intellectual knowledge. Hence, the purpose of intellectual intelligence interchanges with the affective aspect, accordingly, the human soul is also known as the spiritual heart (*qalb*) (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

THE FUNCTION OF INTELLECTUAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AKHLAQ

From an Islamic viewpoint, akhlaq refers to a psychological structure that is firmly formed in a human being and produces specific qualities, with which humans react inevitably, without first needing to deliberate (Miskawayh, 2015; Al-Ghazali, 2013). According to Ibn Qayyim (2006), practical intelligence pertains to intention, determination, and behavior while theoretical intelligence is concerned with knowledge, cognition (*ma'rifah*), and logic (*kalam*). Accordingly, based on the role of practical intelligence in the development of intention and determination, as well as the subsequent movement of action, reveals that human activities it is not simply a matter of intellectual context but is also the primary basis for the establishment of one's akhlaq. Imam al-Ghazali referred practical intelligence as follows:

> "Akhlaq or ethics in its real essence is one's disposition of intelligence. This is in light of the nature of human soul; of which it is clear that it is a substance (*jawhar*) which has been ratioed

and alluded to two sections, namely the upper and the lower parts. Intelligence is said to specifically cater to arrange the relationship with each of the parts. The practical intelligence is the intelligence said to be related to the lower part, namely the body and its system. Wherein with the theoretical intelligence, it is related to the upper part which is meant to resonate and respond to its benefits… henceforth, theoretical intelligence is the attainment of the perfect soul substance whilst practical intelligence is to arrange and govern the body to perfect the theory" (Al-Ghazali, 1988)

The bestial soul, which executes the functioning of human sensory and the motivating role of the concupiscible the irascible faculties, is represented in the lower section. Thus, akhlaq is the product of the mental activity of three faculties of human soul namely; concupiscible, irascible, and intellectual (Ghazali, 1988 & 2013; Al-Syahrastani, 2018; al-Iiji, 1997; Al-Taftazani, 1981). Al-Taftazani described this in detail:

"The fundamentals of akhlaq for humans are [firstly] the concupiscible faculty underpinning the looking for [what is concerned as] good and the rejection of [what is concerned as] bad, in terms of food, drink and others, that is referred to as bestial intelligence and commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammarah*). [Secondly] the irascible faculty that is the basis of risk-taking and the tendency to dominate and holding a high position, which is referred to as predatory intelligence and the admonishing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*). [Thirdly], the intellectual faculty which is the fundamental for perceiving the truth and the tendency of having the atitude of assessing implications and distinguishing between the good and bad" (Al-Taftazani, 1981)

In relation to that, the balance of these three faculties will produce a variety of excellent qualities that are classified into three main domains, namely wisdom for the intellectual faculty, bravery (*syuja'ah*) for the irascible faculty and virtuousness (*iffah*) for the concupiscible faculty. While the system that connects the three faculties in a balanced way is termed as justice virtue. The balance reflects that the properties produced are within the normal range, an equilibrium between two abnormal extremes.

Courage on the other hand is a psychological domain situated in between the domains of impetuousness and cowardice, including constructs such as generous, enthusiastic, bountiful, resilient, patient, firm, chivalrous and calm. While noble nature is a psychological domain positioned in balance between the domain of voraciousness (*syarih*) and apathy (*khumud*), including akhlaq constructs such as shyness, tolerance, clear vision, philanthropy, respect, extraversion, friendly, orderly, calm, fluency of ideas, helpful and skillful. Being wise is an intermediate psychological domain between deception and inanity (Al-Ghazali, 1988). Therein, noble characters can be concluded as a strong self-structure adorned with bravery (*syujaah*) and noble (*iffah*) qualities resulting from the motivational bestial intelligence generated through the acquisition and the use of wisdom by intellectual intelligence in the condition that the human intelligence system plays a good, fair and balanced role.

Considering the concept of akhlaq as a strong structure of the soul, all these constructs are the bricks that make up the structure. Therefore, the embedding on these constructs on the soul requires a process that extends beyond simply producing those attributes but producing them repeatedly over a long period of time. According to Ibn Qayyim (2013), human habits are the outcome of repeated conduct due to mental activities, as he stated:

"The beginning of every theoretical knowledge and voluntary behavior is khawatir [heart fleeting that sparks inspiration: something that moves the heart or creates creativity] and thinking activity. This [process] will form perception, and perception gives birth to desire. Desire then gives rise to conduct, which, when repeated, becomes a habit. Thus, the quality of these stages is contingent upon a good inspiration and thinking burst. An excellent source of inspiration is one that is always observing its Guardian and God, ascending to Him in the region of His pleasure and endearment".

In this context, it may be inferred that akhlaq is the final psychological consequence achieved by repeating the same process and manner of thought until a strong soul structure is formed, that can control individual conducts without a furtherance of thinking activities. This demonstrates that the fundamental

component of the akhlaq structure is the outcome of thought, and that the construction process is the thinking activity. Accordingly, the best practice of the heart in Islam is contemplation, or tafakkur. Ibn Qayyim (2006) observed that: "Tafakkur is the beginning and key to all righteousness... and it is one of the best and most helpful activities of the heart".

THE APPLICATION OF IMAGINATIVE THINKING IN AKHLAQ DEVELOPMENT

How does intellectual intelligence influence the development of akhlaq? The answer seeks to describe the way thinking processes are applied in generating higher akhlaq, in the framework of interaction between theoretical and practical intelligence and the latter with bestial emotional and sensory intelligence. In this regard, although the framework has been described by many scholars such as al-Taftazani (1981), al-Shahrastani (2018), al-Iiji (1997), Amir Hajj (2013) and many others, but it is found that the following passage quotes from Al-Ghazali (1988) is the most comprehensive explanation. He said:

> "…you find that the acquired intellect (*al-aql al-mustafad*) is above all as it is the highest goal whilst [others] are contributory, the actual intellect (*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*) served by dispositional intellect (al-'aql bi al-malakah / dispositional intellect) and material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayulani*) as in both there are preparations for dispositional intellect. Further, the practical mind serves all the above, given that the relationship with the body for the completion of the theoretical mind is under the control of the practical mind. Then the practical intellect is served by the estimative faculty or fantasy (*al-wahm*), and the estimative faculty is served by two intelligences, the preceding and the succeeding intelligence. The preceding intelligence is the intelligence for storing what is produced by estimative intelligence, and the succeeding intelligence is the entire bestial intelligence. Following this is the imaginative faculty (*al-mutakhayyilah*) which is served by two different intelligences. Motivational intelligence served by receiving instructions to motivate actions and the faculty of imagery (*al-quwwah al-khayaliyyah*) serves it by receiving the images that are assembled and separated in it. Then these two intelligences lead two groups of intelligences. Imagery intelligence is served by phantasia (another name for common sense / *hiss al-musytarik*) and phantasia is served by the five senses. As for motivational intelligence, it is served by the appetitive force and the irascible force, while appetitive force and the irascible force are served by psychomotor intelligence (*al-quwwah al-muharrakah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

The above explanation shows connections and interactions between each of intelligences and faculties. By referring to the function of spiritual, intellectual, and bestial intelligence as a framework in analyzing
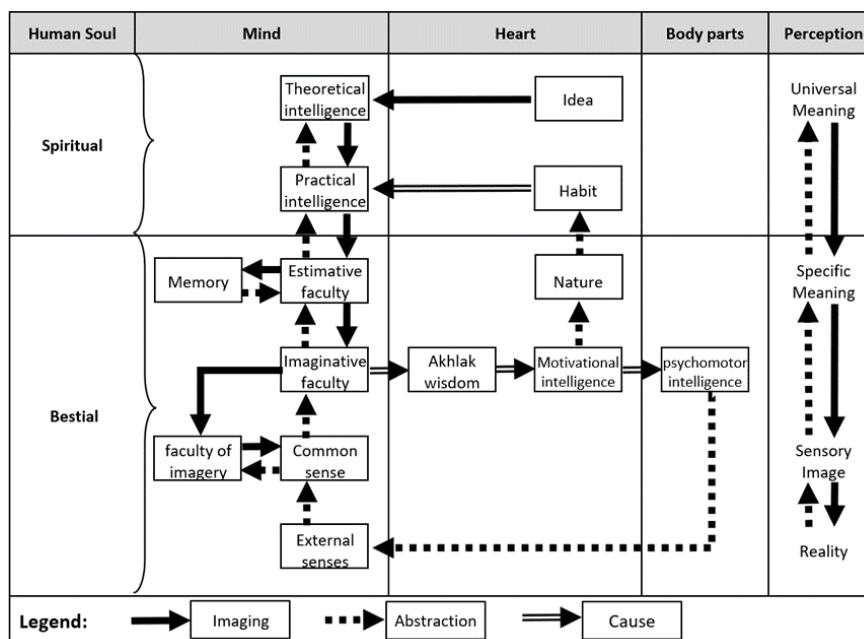
those connections, the explanation can be visualized in the form of model of Islamic spiritual intellectual intelligence model, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Islamic Spiritual Intellectual Intelligence Model

The model demonstrates the existence of three movement courses covering three processes: abstraction process from the bottom up, the imaging process from the top down and the causality process between the faculties of intelligence. The process of abstraction begins with the observation of the images of reality by the five external senses. This observation is then mirrored on the common sense which serves as a screen and simultaneously playing the images as mind figurines. The image is then recycled by the imaging senses before being directed to be modified and stored in the form of meaning by the intelligences succeeding it. The imaging process begins with the acceptance of universal meaning by theoretical intelligence, which is subsequently conveyed to the senses for specialization, aligned with the current reality and stored in the memory for the purpose of recycling. Both the processes, however, are just activities of perceiving certain perspectives either from a reality image or a meaningful image. While the third process involves causal activities from intellectual intelligence to motivational intelligence and then external members.

The significance of this model lies within the position of imagination which is placed between the three courses of the processes, consequently addressing the importance of its role in driving motivation. Al-Iiji (1997) in explaining the role of imagination stated:

"…it is the intelligence that manages sensory images and the specific meaning perceived from these sensory images, either by assembling or disassembling them. This intelligence, if used by the mind to assemble or separate the results of its perception (universal meaningful images) one with another, is called a thinker, likewise if used by the faculty of thinking for a purely sensory subject, it is called imagination.

It is analogous to the ignition of the engine of a car controlled by the practical mind to comprehend sensory information and specific meaning throughout the thinking process. Al-Ghazali explained:

"The administration of the affairs of this world (the body) is derived from the theoretical mind, which in turn receives it from the universal being. The practical mind then extracts specific meanings from the theoretical mind to control the body in accordance with syar'a. When practical reason, with the aid of the body and the power of the imagination, detects the unique constituents of the physical body and moves them in accordance with the Sharia, a beautiful character is produced (al-Ghazali, 1988).

This is due to the fact that knowledge, the end product of thinking or imagining, will inspire self-motivation that underpins certain conduct. Al-Ghazali (2013) explained:

"Tafakkur produces knowledge, feelings and actions, nevertheless, its precise result is knowledge and nothing else. Yes! When knowledge ignites the heart, the state of the heart will change, so will the practices of the physical organs. Hence practice follows the state of the heart, and the state of the heart follows knowledge and knowledge follows thinking, as thinking is the beginning and key to all good things, ... it is better than dhikr since thinking is dhikr and more than that"

The knowledge referred to here is the knowledge that certain deeds are right and known as hikmah khuluqiyah. It is the peak of oneself that is used to manage the appetitive force and the irascible force in determining the best behavior (Al-Ghazali, 1988). By virtue of this, when the mind perceives an image and knows with confidence whether it is good or bad, it will drive motivation to act accordingly. Al-Ghazali (1988) described the following:

"..and the motivation is either to gain benefit or avoid harm. The motivation to attain benefits is called desire, that is, when a meaning is drawn on the imagination and it is perceived to be rewarding, it will evoke active energy to obtain it. As for the motivation to avoid harm, which is known as rage, is when a meaning is drawn on the imagination and it is perceived to be depraved, actions will be induced to reject it or act in response"

Among the examples of the application of imagination in the aspect of spiritual development is the practice of listening to dhikr to oneself as implied from verse 205 of surah Al-a'raf. In relation to that, Al-Razi in his commentary explained:

> "When a person becomes accustomed to and repeatedly engages in a particular behavior, a strong disposition develops in the soul. This is an ascending effect from the body to the soul. So, based on this knowledge, we assert that when a person recites verbal dhikr while hearing it himself, the impact of this dhikr will be formed in the imagination, and the influence of this imagination will become apparent until it reaches the soul. The spiritual radiation will then affect the verbal profoundly, conversely, from the verbal to the imagination and again to the intellect [ruh]. These rays of light will always resonate on these mirrors and mutually strengthen and perfect each other" (Al-Razi, 2012).

The same opinion is delivered by Al-Baqqa'i (1995):

> "Then what is actually required is, the occurrence of verbal zikr to supplement the zikr of the heart. This goal will be achieved by listening to yourself. Through this, the power of imagination will be influenced and therefore, the remembrance of the heart will be strengthened. These lights will always radiate and rebound from one to another until one's position increases from the material realm to the Light that governs light and darkness" results.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore central to revert to the Islamic philosophy of practical aspects in the context of human development. Consequently, the findings ought to be comprehensively considered in the national education system as the core delivery by emphasizing akhlaq development through the exercise of imaginative thinking. This is hoped to support sound personality development of Malaysians.

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