

The Transformation of Meaningful Learning from the Perspective of Islamic Religious Education: Responding to the Schooling without Learning Challenge through a HOTS-Based Framework

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Abstract

The phenomenon of schooling without learning in Indonesia shows high school participation that is not balanced by an increase in the quality of student learning. This study aims to analyze the root of the problem of schooling without learning from the perspective of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and formulate a learning solution framework based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Using a qualitative-descriptive literature review method, data was collected through a systematic documentation study of national and international literature, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through the stages of reduction, categorization, and conceptual synthesis. The results of the study indicate four main factors causing schooling without learning: the dominance of LOTS-oriented learning, a teacher-centered learning approach, an assessment system that emphasizes final results, and materials that are disconnected from real contexts.

Keywords: *schooling without learning, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, HOTS, meaningful learning*

Abstrak

Fenomena schooling without learning di Indonesia menunjukkan tingginya partisipasi sekolah yang tidak diimbangi dengan peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis akar masalah schooling without learning dari perspektif Taksonomi Bloom Revisi serta merumuskan kerangka solusi pembelajaran berbasis Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Menggunakan metode kajian pustaka kualitatif-deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui *iterative literature review* terhadap literatur nasional dan internasional, lalu dianalisis dengan teknik analisis tematik melalui tahapan reduksi, kategorisasi, dan sintesis konseptual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat faktor utama penyebab schooling without learning: dominasi pembelajaran berorientasi LOTS, pendekatan pembelajaran berpusat pada guru, sistem penilaian yang menekankan hasil akhir, dan materi yang terputus dari konteks nyata.

Kata kunci: *schooling without learning, Taksonomi Bloom revisi, HOTS, Meaningful learning*

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Introduction

The phenomenon of schooling without learning remains a serious challenge in Indonesian education. Numerous international studies, including PISA (OECD),¹ and the World Bank's Learning Poverty report,² reveal that rising school participation rates do not necessarily translate into improved student learning outcomes. This finding aligns with Pritchett's analysis,³ which argues that many developing countries have succeeded in expanding access to education yet have failed to ensure meaningful gains in learning achievement. This condition illustrates a persistent gap between students' physical presence in school (schooling) and their actual learning outcomes (learning). As noted by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, two major global educational issues—also highlighted by UNESCO—are "Schooling without Learning" and "Learning Loss," with the former contributing to consistently poor assessment results⁴. In light of this discussion, deep and critical reflection resonates with the Islamic command to always employ sound reasoning, as reflected in Surah Ali-Imran verses 190–191 and Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 3, which state:

أَنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

"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 — those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], 'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.'"

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغِشِي اللَّيْلُ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And it is He who spread the earth and placed therein firmly set mountains and rivers; and from all of the fruits He made therein two mates; He causes the night to cover the day. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought."

From a theological perspective, the emphasis on fostering HOTS-oriented learning aligns closely with the guidance conveyed in the verses above. Human beings are called not merely to memorize text (LOTS), but also to engage in *tadabbur*—deep contemplative reflection—and critical thinking toward real-world phenomena, thereby strengthening their cognitive framework and cultivating the character of *ulul albab*.

Numerous studies affirm that the root cause of the schooling without learning phenomenon lies in poor instructional quality and the limited presence of higher-order cognitive activities. According to Bayer Casey of the Harvard Graduate School of Education⁵, school participation rates in many developing countries have approached those of developed nations, yet student learning outcomes remain low and fail to reflect mastery of the fundamental competencies that should be education's primary goal. This condition underscores a persistent gap between schools functioning as administrative institutions and schools functioning as spaces for effective

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "PISA 2022 Results," 2022, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/indonesia_c2e1ae0e-en.html.

² World Development Report, "Learning to Realize Education's Promise" (Was, 2018).

³ Lant Pritchett, *The Rebirth of Education* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

⁴ Tarmizi Hamdi, "Abdul Mu'ti Ungkap 2 Masalah Besar Dunia Pendidikan," Berita Nasional, 2025, <https://beritanasional.com/detail/104014/abdul-muti-ungkap-2-masalah-besar-dunia-pendidikan-saat-ini-apa-saja>.
Casey Bayer, "Education Without Learning," Harvard, 2018, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/18/03/education-without-learning>.

learning. Reimers similarly observes that many education systems remain trapped in rote-based instruction, resulting in students who are physically present yet whose thinking abilities fail to develop⁶. Teachers tend to prioritize curriculum completion, while the assessments employed measure only recall and comprehension rather than fostering analytical and problem-solving skills—indicating that the education system is designed for administration rather than genuine learning.

Within the framework of learning theory, the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy developed by Anderson and Krathwohl offers a relevant lens for analyzing this issue. Bloom's original taxonomy classifies cognitive processes into six levels, with the highest tiers encompassing the abilities to analyze (C4), evaluate (C5), and create (C6).⁷ Anderson and Krathwohl argue that meaningful learning must push learners toward achieving Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). This view is further supported by research from Heong and Setiawati, which demonstrates that HOTS serves as a key indicator of learning capable of fostering creativity, problem-solving ability, and deep reasoning.⁸

However, various studies conducted in Indonesia reveal that classroom practice remains dominated by Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS). A study by Niana et al.⁹ found that teachers tend to have limited understanding of HOTS and struggle to apply it optimally, resulting in lesson design and implementation that emphasize factual recall (LOTS) rather than the development of students' critical, creative, and analytical thinking skills. Similarly, Sulis's research shows that instructional practice continues to be dominated by LOTS, as evidenced by an analysis of final semester exam questions in which only 23 percent were categorized as HOTS.¹⁰

Research by Erna Yayuk et al. further confirms that the implementation of HOTS in the classroom remains suboptimal, encompassing instructional media, teaching methods, and assessment practices alike.¹¹ A similar finding emerges from Maya Shifra Resnick's study, which reveals that instructional materials and evaluations in many schools fail to demand higher-order thinking from students. This is reflected in the declining frequency of HOTS application—when teachers do present HOTS-based evaluation questions, students are frequently unable to complete them.¹²

The literature on schooling without learning emphasizes that a learning crisis emerges when the education system fails to provide space for students to develop complex thinking competencies. Meanwhile, the literature on Bloom's Taxonomy underscores that learning outcomes can only improve when students progress from LOTS to HOTS. However, studies bridging these two perspectives remain scarce. Most research on HOTS and on schooling without learning has developed along separate tracks, with relatively few studies specifically examining how low levels

⁶ Fernando M Reimers, *Implementing Deeper Learning and 21st Century Education Reforms: Building an Education Renaissance After a Global Pandemic* (Harvard University: Springer Nature, 2021).

⁷ Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl, *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing* (New York: Longman, 2001), <https://archive.org/details/taxonomyforlearn0000unse>.

⁸ Yee Mei Heong et al., "The Needs Analysis of Learning Higher Order Thinking Skills for Generating Ideas," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 59 (2012): 197–203; Sulis Setiawati, "Analisis Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Siswa Sekolah Dasar Dalam Menyelesaikan Soal Bahasa Indonesia," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan KALUNI*, vol. 2, 2019.

⁹ Niana Indriyana, Indah Wardatussa'idah, and Prayuningtyas Angger Wardhani Indah, "Analisis Kemampuan Higher Order Thinking Skills (Hots) Dalam Pembelajaran Ipa Kelas V Di Sekolah Dasar," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 02 (2025): 3659–69.

¹⁰ Setiawati, "Analisis Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Siswa Sekolah Dasar Dalam Menyelesaikan Soal Bahasa Indonesia."

¹¹ Erna Yayuk, Tyas Deviana, and Nawang Sulistyani, "Implementasi Pembelajaran Dan Penilaian Hots Pada Siswa Kelas 4 Sekolah Indonesia Bangkok Thailand," *JINoP (Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran)* 5, no. 2 (2019): 107–22.

¹² Maya Shifra Resnick, "Teachers' Presentation of Higher-Order-Thinking Questions and Student Engagement: Missing out on HOT Opportunities," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 50 (December 2023): 101412, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101412>.

of cognitive engagement in learning directly contribute to the schooling without learning phenomenon.

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. Data were collected in a gradual and iterative manner (iterative literature review). The data collection process began with identifying ten key reference articles from Google Scholar, Publish or Perish, Wiley Online Library, and ScienceDirect based on the study's primary keywords. This was followed by tracing relevant supporting references to deepen the analysis and discussion, including publications from international institutional directories, the World Bank, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The collected literature was then filtered according to publication criteria—articles published between 2019 and 2026, along with references to key foundational texts—yielding a final set of 35 references. Data analysis was subsequently conducted using thematic analysis, comprising three stages: data reduction, which involved selecting relevant data; theme categorization, which involved grouping data into distinct categories; and conceptual synthesis, which involved linking categories to identify relationships between issues and generate applicable conclusions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, achieved by comparing and integrating perspectives from various international and national literature sources to obtain a comprehensive and objective understanding of the relationship between schooling without learning and the cognitive processes within the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

Review of Previous Studies

No	Author/Year	Title	Findings	Limitations
1	Luluk faridah (2024) ¹³	Application of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy: A Study on the Ability to Create (C6) in Fiqh Learning	The focus remains on the supporting and inhibiting factors in achieving C6 within fiqh learning, along with solutions for developing students' creative thinking skills.	This study, however, concentrates solely on C6 and does not address the broader progression from LOTS to HOTS.
2	John Ricards (2023) ¹⁴	Schooling without learning is a terrible waste of precious resources and of human potential" – The South Asian paradox	This study diagnoses the problem of schooling without learning in developing countries from a systemic perspective.	It does not address the transformation of cognitive processes from LOTS to HOTS, nor does it offer an in-depth examination of what actually occurs within face-to-face classroom interaction.
3	Siti Nurngaeni, Fauzi (2025) ¹⁵	Peran Guru dalam Meningkatkan Prestasi Anak di Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Glempang	This study examines the role of teachers in enhancing student achievement outside	The study is limited to a single case at the elementary school level and centers on

¹³ Luluk Faridah, "Penerapan Taksonomi Bloom Revisi: Studi Tentang Kemampuan Mencipta (C6) Dalam Pembelajaran Fikih," *Jurnal Miftahul Ilmi: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 3 (2024): 95–105.

¹⁴ John Richards, "Schooling without Learning Is a Terrible Waste of Precious Resources and of Human Potential," *International Journal of Educational Development* 103 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102904>.

¹⁵ Siti Nurngaeni and Fauzi Fauzi, "Peran Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Prestasi Anak Di Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Glempang," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 04 (2025): 224–38.

			of formal class hours as a response to the phenomenon of schooling without learning.	extracurricular development, without examining the daily cognitive processes within classroom instruction through the lens of Bloom's Taxonomy.
4	Isabella Hasiana, Mely Agustin Reni Pitasari (2025) ¹⁶	Evaluasi Pembelajaran Berbasis Taksonomi Bloom dalam Mengembangkan Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis Siswa	Developing a Bloom's Taxonomy-Based Learning Evaluation Model and Instrument to Measure Elementary Students' Critical Thinking Skills	Bloom's Taxonomy is applied only as an evaluation or assessment instrument, without addressing the root causes of the schooling without learning phenomenon.
5	Yuli Rahmawati, Abdul Mu'ti, Suyanto, Nur Lutfi Rizqa heriningtyas (2025) ¹⁷	Pembelajaran Mendalam: Transformasi Pembelajaran Menuju Pendidikan Bermutu	This study analyzes the Deep Learning framework, encompassing its principles, experiential dimensions, and pedagogical practices, as a systemic transformation strategy to address schooling without learning.	The study places greater emphasis on the use of the SOLO Taxonomy [rather than the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy].

The literature mapping presented in Table 1 reveals that prior studies on schooling without learning and Bloom's Taxonomy have largely developed as separate strands of research. The research gap lies in the absence of an integrative conceptual model that dissects the cognitive crisis in daily classroom practice and comprehensively transforms students' thinking processes from LOTS to HOTS. This paper's novelty lies in addressing that gap by integrating the schooling without learning crisis into the framework of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, as well as formulating a sandwich method strategy as a practical instructional solution to minimize disruption from AI. This strategy cultivates great and meaningful cognitive skills that cannot be replaced by artificial intelligence.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the Schooling without Learning Phenomenon

Schooling without learning refers to a phenomenon in which students are physically present in school, participate in learning activities, and even graduate from an educational institution, yet fail to experience meaningful improvement in learning outcomes. This aligns with research by

¹⁶ Isabella Hasiana and Mely Agustin Reni Pitasari, "Evaluasi Pembelajaran Berbasis Taksonomi Bloom Dalam Mengembangkan Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis Siswa," *Indonesian Journal on Education (IJoEd)* 1, no. 4 (2025): 411–17.

¹⁷ Yuli Rahmawati et al., "Pembelajaran Mendalam: Transformasi Pembelajaran Menuju Pendidikan Bermutu," *Jurnal Penelitian Kebijakan Pendidikan* 18, no. 1 (2025).

Ngurah¹⁸, which identifies this as a gap between attendance and effective learning success—a gap driven by social and psychological factors that influence student engagement and motivation in the learning process. Schooling without learning is regarded as a global learning crisis that not only squanders developmental opportunities but also represents a profound injustice toward children and youth. A World Bank report¹⁹ identifies schooling without learning as a learning crisis in which schools fail to equip students with the education needed to succeed in life.²⁰ Without genuine learning, education fails to alleviate poverty and fails to create opportunity and prosperity for all—particularly given that youth serve as a critical pillar in a nation's development. When young people fail to acquire basic life skills and knowledge, the opportunity to build prosperity is lost, representing wasted potential for both individuals and nations alike. This is echoed by former World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, who stated, "Schooling without learning is a terrible waste of precious resources and of human potential."²¹ Despite rapid growth in access to education, learning outcomes remain low, inequality remains high, and progress remains slow—together forming the core of the global learning crisis.

Beyond the global learning crisis, there exists a stark inequality between wealthy and developing nations in terms of student learning outcomes. Learning failure is not merely a matter of quality but originates from the most basic levels—many students fail to master fundamental literacy and numeracy skills even by the time they reach junior secondary school. The World Bank²² report in 2018 warned of a learning crisis across developing countries, including Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Pakistan, Niger, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, where learning outcomes continued to decline, as reflected in the 2018 PISA results. These findings confirm that the learning crisis remains a persistent global issue, particularly across the developing world.

Indonesia is specifically cited as an example where, even after 15 years of incremental improvement, learning outcomes remain far below the OECD average and still fall well short of international standards. These findings underscore that the schooling without learning phenomenon in Indonesia is not merely a technical issue but a structural problem that continues to warrant attention, given its direct impact on the quality of human resources and the effectiveness of the national education system. This is consistent with the OECD's assertion that schooling without learning results in failed human capital development, rising inequality, stagnant economic growth, persistent poverty, and wasted investment in education.²³

Causes of Schooling without Learning

One of the primary causes of schooling without learning is the persistence of teacher-centered learning models in classroom practice.²⁴ In this model, teachers position themselves as the principal source of knowledge and information, while students remain passive recipients of that knowledge. The classroom becomes an arena of monologue, where teachers speak and students listen, leaving little room for meaningful interaction. As explained by Daien Chikita et al., teacher-centered approaches fail to encourage students to become active and innovative learners, thereby limiting the development of their creativity and critical thinking skills.²⁵ This approach is also

¹⁸ Dek Ngurah Laba Laksana, "Schooling But Not Learnin: Exploring the Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Children 's Engagement in Learning," *Edubasic Journal: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar* 7, no. 2 (2025): h. 283.

¹⁹ Report, "Learning to Realize Education's Promise."

²⁰ Yusuf Suleiman, Yusuf Abiola Abubakar, and Ibrahim Musa Akanbi, "Addressing the Factors Responsible for Schooling without Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in Nigeria," *International Journal of Synergy and Research* 7 (March 2019): 161, <https://doi.org/10.17951/ijsr.2018.7.0.161-178>.

²¹ Richards, "Schooling without Learning Is a Terrible Waste of Precious Resources and of Human Potential."

²² Report, "Learning to Realize Education's Promise."

²³ OECD, "Indonesia Student Performance (PISA 2022)," OECD, 2023, <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=IDN&topic=PI&treshold=10>.

²⁴ Guru Guru Inovatif, "Fenomena Schooling Without Learning Yang Diam-Diam Menghambat Masa Depan Anak," Guru Inovatif, 2025.

²⁵ Daien Chikita, Dewi Purnama Sari, and Rini Puspitasari, "Penerapan Perencanaan Model Pembelajaran Teacher Center Di MTs Negeri 2 Rejang Lebong," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Humaniora* 2, no. 3 (2023): h. 11956.

inconsistent with Jean Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development. Piaget argued that knowledge cannot be passively transferred but must instead be actively constructed by learners through the processes of assimilation and accommodation within their cognitive schemas. Knowledge and information emerge from students' own learning activities and discovery-oriented processes, allowing students to take control of their own thinking.²⁶

The second dimension contributing to schooling without learning is the dominance of output-focused assessment systems that prioritize final results over the learning process itself. This aligns with research by Sulfiani et al., who argue that excessive emphasis on outcomes leads educational institutions to neglect the quality of the learning process as well as the development of students' character and non-academic competencies.²⁷ Within this system, learning success is measured solely through numerical indicators—exam scores, assignment grades, and report card figures—without deeper evaluation of how students actually arrived at those results. This outcome-oriented approach creates perverse incentives, motivating students not to genuinely understand the material but merely to secure "safe" or satisfactory grades. This remains a widely held assumption among educators, students, and parents alike. When high grades are equated with genuine understanding, academic achievement becomes a misleading and invalid metric for measuring true learning quality. This dynamic reinforces the cycle of schooling without learning, as the standards used to define success remain misaligned with education's actual purpose.

The third cause lies in the disconnection between instructional content and students' social context and real-life experiences. This contradicts Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in the learning process, along with his concept of the zone of proximal development.²⁸ As explained by Heru Gunawan et al., contextual learning can enhance students' higher-order thinking skills; Contextual Teaching and Learning is grounded in discovery and in linking the teaching-learning process to students' surrounding behavior and environment.²⁹ In many conventional teaching practices, knowledge is delivered in an abstract and isolated manner, lacking explicit connection to phenomena, challenges, or experiences relevant to students' lived reality. When students cannot perceive the relevance between what they learn and their everyday lives, learning is reduced to a meaningless activity—merely a routine obligation to be completed. They become unable to connect academic knowledge to concrete problem-solving or the authentic situations they encounter. Under these conditions, learning becomes little more than a series of disconnected facts that fail to integrate into students' cognitive schemas, resulting in learning that is far from meaningful.

The final significant dimension driving schooling without learning is the treatment of education as a purely administrative matter, resulting from excessive bureaucratization within the system. Education is treated as an arena of political administration rather than as an institution oriented toward quality.³⁰ This phenomenon can be explained through Max Weber's theory of rationalization. Weber identified that modern bureaucracies tend to become trapped in formal rationalization, whereby procedural rules, paperwork, and administrative compliance gradually displace an institution's substantive values and objectives.³¹ This formal rationalization distorts the role of educators, as teachers become preoccupied with administrative obligations rather than

²⁶ Rosalia Blegur et al., "Penerapan Teori Belajar Konstruktivistik Dalam Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)* 4, no. 7 (2026): h. 4.

²⁷ Sulfiani, Nora Saiva Jannana, and Sedy Sentosa, "Enhancing Islamic Educational Quality through Output-Based Quality Assurance: A Literature Review Perspective," *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 2 (2023): h. 162.

²⁸ Rinesti Witasari, "Belajar Dan Pembelajaran Dari Perspektif Teori Kognitif, Behaviorisme Konstruktivisme Dan Sosiokultural," *Basica* 3, no. 2 (2023): h. 260.

²⁹ Heru Gunawan and Muhammad Roihan Daulay, "Strategi Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)," *Journal of Islamic and Scientific Education Research* 1, no. 3 (2024): h. 40.

³⁰ Gabriela Zahira Salsabilah and Muhammad Sirozi, "Dampak Birokratisasi Terhadap Mutu Dan Relevansi Pendidikan," *Risalah Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 11, no. 3 (2025): h. 1336.

³¹ Chunjie Zhang, "Max Weber and the Re-Enchantment of Charisma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 86, no. 1 (2025): 169–92.

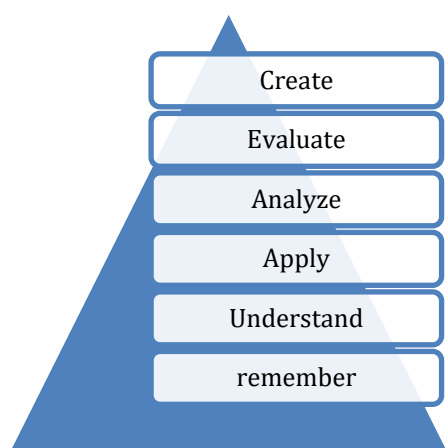
designing meaningful learning experiences. As a result, schools come to function as rigid bureaucratic instruments rather than as spaces for students' intellectual transformation.

Another contributing factor, as identified in research by Anugrah and Hasnawi, is that most teachers at SMAN 1 Jeneponto still lack a comprehensive understanding of HOTS-based assessment.³² This includes limited familiarity with the regulations governing its implementation and the procedural steps required to construct HOTS-based questions. The teachers themselves acknowledged minimal knowledge of the formal policies related to HOTS, with some admitting they had never read about or attended any training on the subject. This limited understanding prevents teachers from optimally designing HOTS questions that meet the required standards and characteristics. Furthermore, they demonstrated insufficient familiarity with the procedural steps of writing HOTS questions, including analyzing basic competencies, developing test blueprints, selecting appropriate stimuli, and constructing assessment rubrics.

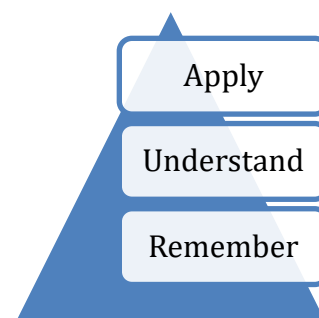
The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy as a Solution Framework

Based on the analysis of the causes of schooling without learning, a learning solution framework is needed—one that emphasizes not only curriculum attainment but also the occurrence of genuinely meaningful learning. This condition therefore calls for a solution framework oriented not merely toward curriculum completion, but toward the quality of the learning process itself. Schooling without learning arises when instruction targets only lower-order cognitive achievement (LOTS), without fostering students' analytical, evaluative, and creative abilities. Learning processes generally emphasize remembering and understanding information, while the skills of applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating receive comparatively little attention. As a result, students can fulfill the administrative demands of education yet lack adequate conceptual understanding and critical thinking ability.

In addressing this issue, the Learning Objective Achievement Criteria within the Kurikulum Merdeka, which are grounded in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, can serve as a strategic framework for a learning solution. Bloom's Taxonomy classifies cognitive processes into six progressive levels. This stands in contrast to conventional instructional practices, which tend to treat the taxonomy merely as an evaluation tool or a means of fulfilling administrative requirements. Bloom's Taxonomy should instead be understood as an instructional design framework—one that guides teachers in systematically structuring learning experiences and pathways oriented toward developing students' thinking abilities.



Pyramid 2: Framework of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy



Pyramid 1: Framework Used in Conventional Learning

³² Anugrah Sukmawati, Hasnawi Haris, and Mustari, "Persepsi Guru Terhadap Penilaian Higher Order Thinking Skills," *Supremasi: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial, Hukum, & Pengajarannya*, 2019.

The complete six-level pyramid represents the theoretical ideal that should serve as the standard for modern education. This framework is designed to cultivate students' higher-order thinking—extending beyond mere remembering and understanding to encompass the abilities to analyze, evaluate, and create. It produces graduates who are critical thinkers, innovators, and well-equipped to navigate the complex challenges of the real world.

In practice, however, a simplified three-level pyramid more accurately reflects the learning reality in many schools. By focusing solely on Remember, Understand, and Apply, this approach confines students to surface-level learning. Such a model is easier to measure through objective tests and routine practice, making it administratively more efficient. Yet the outcome is students who are proficient at memorization and the execution of routine procedures, but who lack the capacity for deep thinking. The challenge facing modern education, therefore, lies in shifting instructional practice from this three-level model toward the more comprehensive and meaningful six-level framework.

It must be emphasized that shifting cognitive focus from the three-level to the six-level model does not mean abandoning or neglecting lower-order thinking. Within the framework of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, LOTS in fact serves as the essential foundation for HOTS—students cannot possibly attain the C4, C5, and C6 levels without first mastering C1, C2, and C3. The central challenge in transforming learning, therefore, is not to discard LOTS, but to extend and expand students' cognitive reach so that it does not stop at the foundational level, but continues toward complex and meaningful thinking.

The application of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy encourages a shift in learning orientation—from mere knowledge transfer toward the development of higher-order thinking skills. At the three highest levels, students are required to process information critically, evaluate various alternative solutions, and generate new ideas and creative products. This process serves as a key indicator of authentic learning, capable of addressing the formalistic practice of schooling without learning that has long persisted. Teachers can design instructional materials based on the *Kriteria Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran* (KKTP, Learning Objective Achievement Criteria), formulated according to Bloom's Taxonomy operational verbs (*Kata Kerja Operasional*/KKO). For example, in Phase D Fiqh learning under the topic "Understanding the Concepts of Riba (Usury) and Rukhsah (Dispensation) in Muamalah," teachers can adjust the KKTP according to Bloom's operational verbs as follows: C1—"able to recall the definitions of riba and rukhsah"; C2—"able to understand and distinguish between riba fadl and riba nasiah"; C3—"able to apply the principle of rukhsah in daily life"; C4—"able to detect elements of riba within a transaction occurring in society"; C5—"able to evaluate the outcomes of DSN-MUI fatwa policies regarding a specific contract (akad)"; and C6—"able to create an educational poster illustrating the simulation flow of a sharia-compliant sale-and-purchase transaction, complete with a visual comparison between lawful transactions and those containing elements of riba." Teachers can also align material coverage with the established KKTP so that learning proceeds in a structured and efficient manner. Even when the initial Learning Outcome targets only the lower three levels, teachers can elevate it to higher levels to help students achieve HOTS, adapting the approach according to the developmental stage of each phase.

Research by Mohammad Arif and Eko Nasrullah found that student responses to HOTS-based learning have a positive impact on instructional effectiveness. Active and positive student responses were correlated with improved learning outcomes, as reflected in a relatively high average student score of 80.8. Statistical analysis further revealed a positive and significant relationship between student response and HOTS-based learning outcomes, with a correlation coefficient of 0.228 and a significance level of 0.004 ($p < 0.05$).³³ Interpretively, this indicates a weak-to-moderate positive relationship, suggesting that stronger student responses to HOTS-based learning

³³ Mohammad Arif Fathurrohman, Anwar Saâ, and Moh Eko Nasrullah, "Hubungan Respon Siswa Terhadap Hasil Belajar Pembelajaran Berbasis High Order Thinking Skill Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Kelas Ix Di Smp Negeri 21 Kota Malang," *Vicratina: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan* 8, no. 6 (2023): 328–38.

correspond to more effective learning outcomes, although the relationship is not particularly strong. This may be attributed to the still-unsatisfactory level of student response, with only 40 percent of students demonstrating a favorable response. It may also stem from limited innovation and creativity among teachers in implementing HOTS, resulting in suboptimal execution. In addition, students' readiness and competence in higher-order thinking remain underdeveloped. It is therefore essential to cultivate consistent HOTS-based learning practices, while ensuring that LOTS is not neglected within the overall learning process.

For the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy to be implemented effectively, it must be integrated with contextual and participatory learning strategies—such as Contextual and Problem-based Learning (CPL, PBL), Quantum Teaching, PAIKEM (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning), and other creative and innovative instructional approaches. These strategies can bridge Bloom's Taxonomy with students' actual learning processes, both theoretically and in connection with everyday life contexts. Teachers can design learning experiences aligned with each cognitive level based on the specific indicators within the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, supported by systematic instructional preparation and ongoing professional development through participation in training programs and seminars.

Research by Imeldan and Dewi Anzelina found that Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is effective in enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills, as this model requires students to actively analyze, solve problems, and interpret real-world phenomena. Student responses in this study were largely positive regarding its impact on HOTS development, with approximately 98.7 percent of students reporting enjoyment and 96.7 percent expressing interest in continuing to learn through this model.³⁴ PBL also provides students with opportunities to develop argumentation skills, decision-making abilities, and adaptability to challenging situations—indirectly strengthening their higher-order thinking capabilities.

Addressing time constraints in HOTS-based learning requires optimizing instructional efficiency through well-structured and purposefully designed activities. Teachers can integrate effective learning strategies, apply optimal time management in discussions and assignments, and utilize interactive instructional media. A phased approach to content delivery, combined with adjusted assessment standards, further enables learning to focus on the essential components of HOTS without compromising the quality of the learning process. Teachers can also reduce unnecessary cognitive load—avoiding excessive or redundant content—so that materials are organized logically and systematically, while maximizing productive cognitive engagement.

The implementation of HOTS-based learning, as described by Fitri Handayani and Muhammad Syukur, is operationalized through three complementary dimensions.³⁵ The first dimension involves critical analysis of information, utilizing authentic stimuli to stimulate students' evaluative and reasoning processes. The second dimension fosters the development of student creativity through investigative activities and the production of works that require independent problem-solving. The third dimension integrates complex problem-solving through collaborative activities that hone students' analytical abilities and capacity for innovation.

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy serves as a conceptual solution framework for addressing schooling without learning, while contextual learning strategies function as the practical means of realizing a learning process that is meaningful, reflective, and oriented toward the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Technological Disruption: The Illusion of Competence Trap and the Urgency of HOTS in the Age of AI

Amid rapid technological advancement, schooling without learning now faces a new and more complex disruptive challenge—the emergence of artificial intelligence, which has created a

³⁴ Imelda and Dewi Anzelina, “Respon Siswa Terhadap Pembelajaran Problem Based Learning Dalam Meningkatkan Higher Order Thinking Skills,” *MES: Journal of Mathematics Education and Science* 5, no. 1 (2019): 11–19.

³⁵ Fitri Handayani and Muhammad Syukur, “Implementasi Pembelajaran Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) Di MA Negeri 1 Watansoppeng,” *Pinisi Journal of Sociology Education Review* 1, no. 2 (2021): 127–35.

paradox within the world of education: the ease of accessing information. Ironically, this very convenience risks eroding students' capacity for critical thinking. When classroom learning remains anchored in low-level cognitive processes, AI can readily assume the role of higher-order cognitive functions, even surpassing human cognitive ability in doing so. Amid rapid technological advancement, schooling without learning now faces a new and more complex disruptive challenge—the emergence of artificial intelligence, which has created a paradox within the world of education: the ease of accessing information. Ironically, this very convenience risks eroding students' capacity for critical thinking. When classroom learning remains anchored in low-level cognitive processes, AI can readily assume the role of higher-order cognitive functions, even surpassing human cognitive ability in doing so.

Although AI offers considerable benefits, this technology also carries negative consequences. One of its principal impacts is a decline in knowledge productivity, whereby excessive and uncontrolled AI use can diminish students' creativity and depth of analysis within the learning process. This technology also hampers the development of cognitive skills and practical competence, as learners become increasingly dependent on AI for virtually everything. Before AI's integration into learning, students' cognitive development typically followed a natural progression from the lowest to the highest levels—from remembering through to creating.

However, the emergence of AI technology has triggered a disruption that inverts the natural progression of students' cognitive development. Through the automation AI offers, students can obtain analytical results and intellectual output instantly, bypassing the structured thinking process that should otherwise be required. This phenomenon creates a cognitive bypass, in which students appear capable of producing higher-order learning outcomes while, in substance, failing to master the fundamental concepts of the subject being studied. In effect, artificial intelligence disrupts the proper sequence of the taxonomy, effectively climbing the taxonomy pyramid on the student's behalf.

As students' critical analytical skills decline, they become less discerning toward information provided by AI, which can ultimately undermine both the learning process and academic integrity.³⁶ As a constructive solution to this AI-driven disruption, instructional strategies should adopt the Sandwich Method (Human First–Human Last)³⁷ approach, which positions human cognition as the primary point of control. In this method, the learning process begins with students initiating original ideas, proceeds through exploration and comparison using artificial intelligence, and concludes with synthesis, critical verification, and refinement carried out by the students themselves. This mechanism compels students to cross-check the accuracy of AI-generated data, thereby keeping their critical reasoning skills sharp. Nevertheless, implementing this model still depends heavily on teacher professionalism, as educators must serve as facilitators who guide students in distinguishing between artificially generated information and factual truth. Teachers must also guide students in verifying the data presented by AI.

From the perspective of Islamic pedagogy, this aligns closely with the Islamic principle of *tabayyun* and *tatsabbut*—verifying and cross-checking information—particularly in relation to AI-generated output. This integration affirms that critical scrutiny of information is not merely a methodological principle, but a divinely mandated obligation (*syar'i*) established within Islamic teaching, as reflected in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهْلَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

³⁶ Pamela Marie Patrick, Sun Yee Yip, and Chynna Campbell, “Artificial Intelligence and Higher-Order Thinking: A Systematic Review of Educator and Student Experiences and Perspectives in Higher Education,” *Higher Education Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2025): h. 6.

³⁷ Lane Freeman, “The AI Sandwich: Human-First, Human-Last in an AI-Rich Educational Environment,” Online Learning Consortium, 2026, <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/olc-insights/2026/01/the-ai-sandwich/>.

"O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful."³⁸

Although this method may appear to involve a longer sequence of steps, the collaborative process between students and AI transforms the burden of learning into an engaging act of discovery. By critically reviewing AI-generated answers, students are ensured not merely to copy machine-produced output, but to genuinely understand the material—embodying a form of meaningful learning.

Conclusion

This study confirms that schooling without learning in Indonesia is not merely a matter of educational access at the quantitative level, but a qualitative issue rooted in instructional design and implementation that remains trapped within LOTS. Integrating the analysis of schooling without learning with the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy reveals that the root causes of meaningful learning failure lie in four structural dimensions: the dominance of teacher-centered models, output-focused assessment systems, learning disconnected from real-life context, and the bureaucratization of education. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy offers a viable solution framework by encouraging a shift from the three-level to the six-level model; however, its implementation requires strategic integration with contextual and participatory learning methodologies (CTL, PBL).

These findings underscore that transforming learning into a meaningful process requires a paradigm shift not only at the level of classroom practice, but also at the level of policy, curriculum, and national assessment systems. This study has thus fulfilled its objective of identifying the root causes of the problem through an analysis of cognitive processes and formulating an operational, HOTS-based solution framework. For future research, it is recommended that empirical studies be conducted to examine the effectiveness of implementing the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy integrated with contextual learning strategies within specific Indonesian school contexts; that in-depth qualitative research explore the driving and inhibiting factors of HOTS implementation from the perspectives of teachers, students, and school policy; that further analysis examine the relationship between HOTS-based learning transformation and its long-term impact on graduates' competencies and their success at subsequent levels of education or in the workforce; and that practical implementation models be developed that can be adapted to the contextual limitations faced by schools across Indonesia.

³⁸ Lajnah pentashihan Mushaf Al-Quran, *Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya Edisi Penyempurnaan*, Edisi Peny (Jakarta: KEMENAG, 2019), <http://repositorio.unan.edu.ni/2986/1/5624.pdf>⁰<http://fiskal.kemenkeu.go.id/ejournal>⁰<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cirp.2016.06.001>⁰<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.powtec.2016.12.055>⁰<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijfati.2019.02.006>⁰<https://doi.org/10.1>

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