

## Logical Knowledge in the Philosophy and Current Issues Course at Malaysian Tertiary Education Institutions: A Conceptual Paper

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i11/15125> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i11/15125

**Published Date:** 07 November 2022

### Abstract

Due to the presence of abundant technological and informative advancements in today's world, the current generation should embrace logical knowledge in shaping their skills especially in becoming critical thinkers. With respect to this, logical knowledge is known as one of the branches of knowledge that functions in directing an individual's thoughts by carefully filtering the information received before making credible decisions or conclusions. Therefore, the present study seeks to discover the importance of understanding logical knowledge from the context of the Philosophy and Current Issues course, a university core course that is taught at all higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The data for this qualitative study was collected through documentation and content analysis methods involving the syllabus of the Philosophy and Current Issues course. The findings, there are five importance of logical knowledge to students which are i) drives students' thoughts towards a systematic way of thinking ii) as a foundation for students to understand other types of knowledge iii) as a foundation for students in academic research iv) as a guide for students to distinguish between the truth and falsehood v) Logical Knowledge trains students to think critically.

**Keywords:** Logical Knowledge, Philosophy, Thinking, Education, and Higher Learning Institutions

### Introduction

Due to the importance of mastery of philosophical knowledge in shaping undergraduates' thinking skills and identities, the Philosophy and Current Issues course has been made a compulsory course taught to all undergraduates in both public and private higher learning

institutions in Malaysia starting the 2019/2020 intake. This decision was made during the Ministerial Follow-Up Meeting 14/2019 on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (Marinsah, 2022). Technically, the implementation of this course is a part of the efforts in achieving the National Philosophy of Education that aims to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced (Razak & Hashim, 2019). Additionally, the contents and structure of this course are specifically designed to benefit undergraduates by shaping their holistic and integrated self-potentials which encompass the mastery of knowledge and soft skills (Marinsah, 2021). At the same time, the implementation of this course is seen to be aligned with the national aspiration of curriculum transformation (Marinsah, 2022).

In general, this course contains eight (8) main topics that are taught across a period of fourteen (14) weeks of lecture (Course Information Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, 2021) as the followings:

- Topic 1: Introduction to Philosophical Knowledge
- Topic 2: Philosophy in Life
- Topic 3: The Arts and Techniques of Thinking
- Topic 4: The Concept of *Insan* (Psychology & Sociology)
- Topic 5: The Concept of *Insan* (Metaphysics)
- Topic 6: Epistemology
- Topic 7: Epistemology and Current Issues (Ideology)
- Topic 8: Ethics as a Philosophical Issue (Decolonisation)

Upon the completion of this course, students are expected to have achieved three (3) learning outcomes. Firstly, they are able to explain current issues based on the knowledge of philosophy, the National Philosophy of Education, and the National Principles. Secondly, they are also able to explain current issues according to mainstream thinking in various philosophical views. Next, students are also expected to be able to discuss current issues from the perspective of comparative philosophies as the foundation for engaging intercultural dialogues. At the same time, this course also emphasizes the aspect of soft skill development including critical thinking, problem-solving, ethics, and professional morale, as well as lifelong education (Course Information Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, 2021). Thus, this course is a highly significant subject that relates to the current generation who is faced with various challenges that may distract their thinking styles which will subsequently deviate their identities.

## **Discussion**

### **i. Logical Knowledge in the Philosophy and Current Issues Course**

Logical knowledge is a branch of knowledge that discusses the various techniques of accurate and systematic thinking. Logic is widely used in various fields of knowledge as a methodology in academic discussions. The role of logical knowledge in the formation of civilization is undoubtedly crucial, hence, it must be fully understood in assisting the current generation with proper and critical thinking styles.

The term "logic" originates from the Greek word that is *logos* which means reason or think, rational ground, basic, thoughts, or speech (The Encyclopaedia of Religion, 71, 1987). According to dictionary "Kamus Dewan", logical knowledge is defined as the science of principles that enables thinking and reasoning to be made systematically; additionally, it also

means the knowledge of ways of thinking. Meanwhile, in the Arabic context, “logic” refers to the mantic of speaking or utterances (Ibn Manzur, 2003). In the Malay perspective in “Kamus Dewan”, mantic is understood as the knowledge that discusses an issue using our minds. Meanwhile, from the aspect of terminology, “logic” is seen as a branch of philosophy in the axiology aspect that explores the accurate principles of reasoning.

According to Al-Ghazali, “logic” refers to the techniques which differentiate between the truthful and false definitions/al-qiyas. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun defines logic as the technique that explains an individual's knowledge of right or wrong thoughts using definitions and justifications (al-tasdiqat). According to al-Jurjani, logic is related to the techniques that control human thoughts from misbehaving during the thinking process. Therefore, in a study by (Wahab & Hamat, 2018), it was concluded that logical knowledge, or mantic, is a branch of knowledge that discusses the accurate techniques of thinking. Hence, it is without a doubt that logical knowledge possesses a vital role in producing graduates who are professional and mature thinkers which will subsequently lead towards the realization of the Keluarga Malaysia aspiration.

The integration of logical knowledge in the syllabus of Philosophy and Current Issues can be seen in its third topic entitled the Arts and Techniques of Thinking. As generally understood, logical knowledge is an art and thinking framework that enables individuals to think logically and systematically. Based on the observation and analysis made, it is shown that the objective of this topic is to explain the roles, functions, and relationships between logical knowledge and philosophical knowledge. At the same time, various common mistakes in thinking are also exposed to students. Therefore, students' first discussion will mainly go about exposing them to various definitions of logical knowledge so that they will be able to understand and comprehend the terms related to logical knowledge well.

Furthermore, students taking this course are also exposed to various discussions on the position of logical knowledge in the hierarchy of knowledge. This is a crucial aspect for the students as it enables them to understand the functions and position of logical knowledge as the bridge that connects with other fields of knowledge. In addition, this is also important in order to expose the students that logical knowledge receives special attention among Muslim scholars (Hamid, 2001) including al-Ghazali who opined that “mantic is the scale to knowledge, hence, any knowledge from those who do not understand it should not be trusted” (Abd Latif & Rosmawati, 1997).

Meanwhile, Ibn Rushd claimed that learning logical knowledge is compulsory, provided that it should be channeled towards something beneficial, does not go against Islamic teachings, and does not ruin one's faith. According to Abd Latif and Rosmawati (1997), Ibn Rushd's views on this are made based on the Quran, in Surah al-Hasyr, 59:2, in which Allah SWT says:

*“So, learn a lesson from this (incident), O you who have perceptive minds and eyes”(Surah al-Hasyr, 59:2)*

In addition, in this course, students are exposed to various logical techniques and arguments. These two elements are highly important in oral and written communication as it trains

students to utilize a language systematically, especially in making an argument, which would subsequently assist the listener in understanding the information being delivered. Furthermore, this skill is crucial in avoiding miscommunication due to the “answers not matching the question posed” situation (Hamid, 2001). In addition, the ability to make an argument is related to one’s thinking and intellectual skills which are somehow vital, especially in social sciences. This can be measured from the use of credible information, proofs, and shreds of evidence that are utilized relevantly in justifying a point during a debate. Besides, a concrete argument is important in discouraging any accusation, excuses, or assumptions made by other persons, it entails the ability to criticize, propose an idea, as well as highlighting the opponent's poor justifications or information concerning the topic being discussed (Hamid, 2001) Therefore, it can be understood that making a concrete argument involves the integration of justifiable statements regarding a matter, be it in a form of data or other relevant sources, in producing an accurate conclusion. This is, indeed, an important skill that students must possess in becoming high-quality graduates, especially with regard to their thinking skills.

Furthermore, as argument techniques are also needed as one of the skills in problem-solving, students taking this course are exposed to the purposes of an argument as mentioned by (Hamid,2001) as follows:

- a. To make a decision
- b. To explain the position of a particular matter
- c. To forecast using reasoning skills
- d. To influence others’ thoughts and actions
- e. To empower a perspective or interpretation
- f. To correct misinterpretations
- g. To strengthen the support for someone or something

The common elements that are present in discussing logical techniques and arguments are deductive, inductive, and fallacy—which is also taught to students who take the Philosophy and Current Issues course. Concerning that, students taking the course are well exposed to these elements, which will benefit them in their daily life, through a few stages. Firstly, they are exposed to the definitions, followed by establishing understanding through the exercise and practice related to the techniques. These practical inductive and deductive approaches are seen as relevant in preparing the students for the reality of their life as a student.

A deductive argument (or logic) comprises a set of general assumptions in producing a specific statement that is commonly used in daily life. Arguments that are presented must contain a fundamental principle, fact, and concrete evidence. Meanwhile, an inductive argument (or logic) is a specific statement formed by a set of general assumptions. This type of argument is derived from specific cases of general principles as well as from facts and theories. This inductive approach is commonly used in lab-based research (Hamid, 2001).

Hence, students taking the course are given various samples of inductive and deductive arguments, as well as provided with exercises where they collaboratively develop the premises and arguments. For instance:

Samples of deductive arguments		Samples of inductive arguments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>solat fardhu</i> is compulsory for all Muslims</li> <li>• Yusuf is a Muslim</li> <li>• Yusuf must perform the <i>solat fardhu</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mamat is a drug addict</li> <li>• Mamat frequently steals things</li> <li>• Drug addicts frequently steal things</li> </ul>

Apart from being exposed to deductive and inductive arguments, students taking this course are also taught about fallacies. A fallacy is a weak argument that is unacceptable due to the false premises used in the reasoning to support the conclusion. As thinking should encompass logical arguments, fallacies are an example of a wrong way of thinking (Hamid, 2001). Additionally, fallacies may also happen due to false assumptions regarding the surrounding circumstances. For instance, in the case if the Malaysian football team won a friendly match against Manchester United. Malaysian team's fanatic fans would make an assumption that their team's performance is at par with other international teams, while in reality, it is merely an inaccurate assumption as the Malaysian team's performance is different from what is claimed by its fanatic fans.

Specifically, fallacies can be further understood by looking into its 41 types which may happen in arguments. Nevertheless, in the Philosophy and Current Issues course, students are only exposed to two (2) main types of fallacies which are formal and informal. The formal fallacy happens in a deductive argument which is regarded as weak concerning its structure. More specifically, the premises in the argument are not supporting the conclusion in which a particular argument is only regarded as valid if its conclusion is aligned with the premises (Hamid, 2001)

Meanwhile, the informal fallacy refers to the weakness that is present in an argument but it does not have any direct relationship with the technique or structure of the argument. Commonly, this happens due to some factors including insufficient data, biases or prejudice, as well as unwarranted assumptions or beliefs that are influenced by emotions (Hamid, 2001) After learning about these types of fallacies, students taking the course are expected to be more careful in their thoughts and actions. This is deemed an important skill in assisting them to assess the pros and cons of a particular issue, especially in problem-solving.

## ii. The Importance of Logical Knowledge to Students

Without any doubt, logical knowledge plays a vital role in determining one's thinking style, especially in the context of today's world when all individuals are faced with various challenges that entail them to have rational thinking. With respect to this, the teaching of logical knowledge in the Philosophy and Current Issues course is seen as a highly significant measure in shaping students' thinking styles. The followings are the importance of logical knowledge to students:

a) Logical knowledge drives students' thoughts towards a systematic way of thinking  
 Logical knowledge is a crucial guide for students to think systematically due to some reasons. Through mantic knowledge, students can polish up their potential to think accurately, not

only about religious matters but also encompasses all aspects of life (Wahab & Hamat, 2020). Therefore, there are four (4) basic elements of human thinking that need to be highlighted in ensuring that we can think systematically according to logical knowledge. Firstly, by identifying and understanding the premises of the problem, secondly, by finding the reasons for the problem, fourthly, by evaluating the solutions, and finally, by making a decision or conclusion (Wahab & Hamat, 2020). For instance, in the current situation where students are dealing with the challenges of learning in the COVID-19 pandemic, they must be able to understand the issues they are facing as well as identifying the best available solutions for the situation.

b) Logical Knowledge acts as a foundation for students to understand other types of knowledge

Logical knowledge is widely utilized in various disciplines of knowledge. According to al-Ghazali, mantic knowledge is a methodology, tool, or medium for a piece of particular knowledge. For instance, in the field of *usul fiqh* and *ilm qalam*, al-Ghazali made logical knowledge a *muqaddimah* (introduction) in his book entitled *al-Mustasfa min al-Usul* (Hamat, 2005). In addition, logical knowledge is also widely adapted in the discussions of *ilm 'aqidah* and *ilm qalam*. Meanwhile, in Mathematics, the use of logical knowledge is seen in identifying the size of figures or values. In linguistics, logical knowledge is used especially in the symbolical logic that focuses on the use of symbols in logic that determines the validity of an argument (Wahab & Hamat, 2018). All in all, this is evidence that logical knowledge is not restricted to the use in Islamic Studies, it is a vital fundamental in the mastery of language studies and Mathematics. Hence, the adaptation of logical knowledge in the Philosophy and Current Issues course is deemed a significant measure to educate students towards the mastery of language studies and Mathematics.

c) Logical Knowledge is a foundation for students in academic research

Academic research is an important aspect that all tertiary students have to be exposed to during their studies. Therefore, the adaptation of logical knowledge is a vital foundation for them to be able to master the related skills in academic research, regardless of their discipline, be it the pure sciences or social sciences streams. Technically, the process of concluding a premise that arises from any issue depends either on the deductive or inductive technique. Most modern scientific studies initiate from observations, experiences, and experiments of a matter that is specific until the formation of a general conclusion using the inductive technique that is rooted in the *istiqra'* methodology (Ismail & Azhar, 2021). Besides, the use of the inductive technique in qualitative studies is applied in analyzing data through thinking patterns in obtaining shreds of evidence from specific to generic information.

Meanwhile, the deductive technique is applied in concluding from generic to specific information. This methodology is adapted from the *al-qiyas* method that is used in analyzing data that are gathered from research works. The *al-qiyas* method focuses on the process of looking for the rights through the indirect argument in forming a conclusion (Ismail & Azhar, 2020). Next, a comparative technique is needed to conclude by making a comparison and analysis of data that are obtained during research works. Any research process that is carried out without using the logical and systematic thinking process, be it deductively or inductively, would produce a conclusion that is exposed to errors (Wahab & Hamat, 2020).

- d) Logical Knowledge is a guide for students to distinguish between the truth and falsehood

Even though humans can think using their minds to obtain knowledge and truth, the absence of the right thinking system would somehow hinder them from obtaining knowledge and being influenced by wrong thoughts and beliefs (Ismail & Azhar, 2021). Students are generally able to distinguish the truth and falsehood using various logical techniques that are exposed to them by justifying the errors that happen during the thinking process. Subsequently, these errors would form a false belief in which involved individuals are classified into three groups of *sufastaiyyun* who are (i) being doubtful about the truth and assuming it as merely an imagination, (ii) considering something based on their personal views until it loses its truth, or (ii) being doubtful about the ability of humans to achieve the truth of knowledge (Husin, 2018).

In the context of today's world, logical knowledge is vital in preparing individuals from being deviated by thoughts that are against Islamic teachings such as secularism, liberalism, and atheism. For instance, in the issue of the use of the "Allah" term by non-Muslims, the *ta'rif* (definition) technique in logical knowledge is used to argue with liberal individuals. Furthermore, this technique enables the justification of a particular term through the *tasawwur* process (Wahab & Hamat, 2018). *Tasawwur* is an Arabic word that refers to the knowledge of the conceptual views of the truth of a matter through the expressions of subjects without any specification of a decree on it (Hamat, 2002). This is a crucial element for students in facing various ideologies that are influencing the current society. Hence, with the presence of logical knowledge, students are expected to be able to distinguish between the truth or falsehood of a particular belief or principle that is being highlighted.

- e) Logical Knowledge trains students to think critically

Critical thinking skills are an important aspect that needs to be mastered by students. According to (Wahab & Hamat, 2018) the technique of logical knowledge in problem-solving is fundamental in establishing critical thinking skills. Additionally, critical thinking is a skill that involves the ability to think critically, creatively, innovatively, and analytically as well as the ability to apply understanding and knowledge in solving a new problem. Students who can master critical thinking skills may assist themselves in solving issues well through the integration of logical knowledge with the processes of interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, concluding, arguing, and assessing the validity of a statement.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the discussion presented in this paper, it can be concluded that logical knowledge is significant and plays a vital role in shaping an individual's thought to function systematically and accurately. This, in turn, would enable them to optimize the capacity of their minds in gaining as much beneficial knowledge as possible. In addition, logical and argument knowledge that is exposed to students, which involves deductive and inductive logical techniques, together with fallacies, would assist in disciplining students with respect to their thinking skills. Subsequently, this would hinder them from being influenced by all sorts of false thoughts that are happening in the current world. The results of the study clearly show five importance of logical knowledge to students, first drives students' thoughts towards a systematic way of thinking, second as a foundation for students to understand other types of knowledge, third as a foundation for students in academic research fourth, as a guide for students to distinguish between the truth and falsehood and lastly logical knowledge trains

students to think critically. In conclusion, logical knowledge that is adapted in the Philosophy and Current Issues course at Malaysian universities is undoubtedly a relevant measure thus it must be maintained to be taught in producing quality graduates who will become a valuable asset for the development of the nation.

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