



Pedagogical Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Developing Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); Islamic Religious Education; Instructional Strategies

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This study aims to examine the instructional strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to develop Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing their implementation. A qualitative case study was conducted at Madrasah. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal six key instructional strategies: active learning, higher-order questioning, contextual learning, interactive discussion, diverse learning resources, and HOTS-based assessment. The implementation of these strategies was supported by teachers' pedagogical competence, adequate instructional resources, and a conducive learning environment, while limited instructional time, heterogeneous student readiness, and conventional teaching practices emerged as major constraints. The study concludes that the successful development of HOTS requires an integrated instructional approach combining planning, implementation, classroom interaction, and authentic assessment. This research contributes a comprehensive pedagogical framework for HOTS-oriented Islamic Religious Education and provides practical recommendations for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers to strengthen instructional quality.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century has shifted from knowledge transmission toward developing students' abilities to think critically, analytically, creatively, and solve complex problems (Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). These competencies are represented by Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which enable learners to analyze information, evaluate evidence, construct arguments, and generate innovative solutions rather than merely memorize knowledge (Alali, 2024; Musyaffa & Atno, 2025). In response to globalization, technological advancement, and Industrial Revolution 4.0 demands, education systems must prepare students with adaptability, critical reasoning, and lifelong learning capacities (Rahim et al., 2025; Wakifah et al.,

2023). Accordingly, Indonesia has integrated HOTS through the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing competency-based and student-centered learning (Ajuoga & Odhiambo, 2023; Situmorang et al., 2026). Therefore, HOTS development has become a strategic educational priority.

Despite its importance, HOTS implementation remains challenging in Indonesian schools. Research indicates that classroom practices are still frequently dominated by teacher-centered instruction, emphasizing memorization rather than analysis, evaluation, and creation (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024; Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024). This condition is influenced by limited teacher competence in designing HOTS-based learning, insufficient professional development, inadequate resources, and persistent conventional teaching practices (Palangda et al., 2025; Rusmin et al., 2024). Consequently, students receive limited opportunities to engage in inquiry, problem-solving, reflective thinking, and collaborative knowledge construction (Mor et al., 2025). The gap between curriculum expectations and classroom implementation remains a significant concern because teachers' instructional strategies strongly influence students' ability to develop higher-order thinking competencies required for academic success and future professional challenges.

The challenge of HOTS implementation is also evident in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which aims not only to transfer religious knowledge but also to develop students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacities through reflective and critical thinking (Rahmah et al., 2026; Rahmanto et al., 2026). Islamic education encourages students to understand religious teachings through reflection (*tadabbur*) and rational inquiry rather than memorization alone, as emphasized in Islamic intellectual traditions (Asokawati & Ahmadi, 2026; Isnaeni et al., 2026). However, PAI learning practices often remain focused on recalling religious concepts, limiting students' ability to analyze contemporary issues, evaluate perspectives, and apply Islamic values in real-life contexts (Asmawi & Nasir, 2025; Baehaqi & Abdullah, 2025; Qudriyah & Manshur, 2025). Although teachers have introduced discussion, problem-based learning, and case studies, inconsistent implementation still creates variations in students' HOTS development (Otaya et al., 2025; Solihin & Wijaya, 2024).

Recent studies emphasize that HOTS integration in Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to students' critical, analytical, and reflective thinking development. Research by Yuniar et al. (2021) indicated that HOTS-oriented learning improves cognitive engagement and encourages active participation in classroom discussions (Ardiansyah et al., 2025). Similarly, Hidayat (2022) found that problem-based learning and inquiry approaches positively influence students' critical thinking and decision-making abilities in PAI learning contexts (Fitriati et al., 2025). Rahmawati (2024) highlighted that teachers implementing contextual learning, collaborative discussion, and authentic assessment are more effective in developing higher-order thinking than those using conventional approaches (Rahmawati et al., 2026). Furthermore, effective HOTS implementation requires teachers' pedagogical competence, creativity, and ability to design activities that stimulate analysis, evaluation, and

knowledge construction (Sadiya et al., 2025). However, existing studies mainly examine individual learning models rather than integrated instructional strategies.

Although previous research has contributed valuable insights into HOTS implementation in Islamic Religious Education, several gaps remain unresolved (Fitria & Nafiah, 2025; Mawarni et al., 2025). First, many studies focus on measuring learning outcomes after implementing specific models such as Problem-Based Learning, Discovery Learning, or Project-Based Learning, while paying limited attention to teachers' strategic decisions throughout instruction (Muhammad et al., 2025). Second, previous investigations often examine separate elements of teaching practice, including planning, implementation, or assessment, rather than viewing instructional strategies as an integrated pedagogical process (Lestari et al., 2025). Third, limited research explores supporting and inhibiting factors affecting teachers' efforts to develop HOTS in daily classroom practices, particularly in Islamic secondary education (Suhiroh et al., 2023). Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how teachers design, implement, evaluate, and improve HOTS-oriented PAI instruction.

This study contributes a new perspective by shifting the focus from evaluating individual learning models to examining teachers' instructional strategies as an integrated pedagogical process for developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Islamic Religious Education. Unlike previous studies that primarily investigate the effectiveness of particular teaching methods, this research explores how teachers formulate learning objectives, select instructional approaches, facilitate classroom interactions, utilize learning media, implement HOTS-oriented assessments, and address contextual challenges during instruction. Furthermore, this study identifies supporting and inhibiting factors influencing HOTS implementation, providing a comprehensive understanding of classroom practices. This integrated perspective represents the novelty and state of the art of the research by connecting planning, implementation, assessment, and contextual factors within a unified framework. The findings are expected to enrich HOTS-based pedagogy and provide practical recommendations for improving teachers' professional competence and PAI learning quality.

Based on the educational challenges, classroom phenomena, and research gaps discussed above, this study aims to answer the research question: How do Islamic Religious Education teachers develop Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) through their instructional strategies, and what factors support or hinder its implementation? This question is based on the argument that teachers' instructional strategies are central determinants of successful HOTS development because they shape students' opportunities to engage in critical analysis, reflective inquiry, collaborative learning, and authentic problem-solving. Effective HOTS-oriented learning cannot be achieved merely through adopting innovative instructional models; rather, it requires systematic integration of learning objectives, teaching methods, classroom interactions,

assessment practices, and continuous reflection. Therefore, investigating teachers' instructional strategies provides empirical evidence for strengthening Islamic Religious Education pedagogy and supporting educators and policymakers in improving HOTS implementation in secondary education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' instructional strategies in developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). A qualitative case study was selected because the research sought to explore a contemporary educational phenomenon within its real-life context through intensive interaction with participants and the surrounding environment. Rather than measuring variables statistically, this approach enabled the researcher to interpret teachers' experiences, instructional practices, and classroom interactions comprehensively. The study was conducted at MA Miftahul Jannah, Probolinggo, Indonesia, which was purposively selected because the school has initiated the integration of HOTS-oriented learning into Islamic Religious Education while still encountering variations in its classroom implementation. This context provided a valuable setting for examining how teachers design and implement instructional strategies to foster students' higher-order thinking skills and the contextual factors influencing their effectiveness.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Non-participant classroom observations were conducted on 12 February 2026 in Grade XI Islamic Religious Education classes to examine how teachers implemented instructional strategies that encouraged students' critical, analytical, and creative thinking. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken on 14 February 2026 with the Islamic Religious Education teacher as the primary informant and several students as supporting informants to obtain detailed explanations regarding instructional planning, classroom implementation, perceived challenges, and supporting factors related to HOTS development. Documentary evidence, including lesson modules, teaching materials, assessment instruments, students' learning worksheets, classroom photographs, and school documents, was collected on 22 February 2026 to complement and validate the observational and interview data. These multiple sources of evidence were intentionally employed to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of four interrelated stages: data condensation, data display, data verification, and conclusion drawing. During the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, coded, and organized field data according to themes relevant to teachers' instructional strategies for developing HOTS. Subsequently, the condensed data were presented through narrative descriptions, thematic matrices, and conceptual categorizations to facilitate interpretation and identify

relationships among emerging patterns. The verification process involved continuously reviewing the consistency and credibility of the findings by comparing evidence obtained from different data sources and collection techniques. Finally, conclusions were drawn inductively through iterative interpretation, enabling the researcher to formulate comprehensive explanations regarding teachers' instructional strategies, supporting factors, and barriers to implementing HOTS-oriented learning in Islamic Religious Education.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed several validation strategies based on the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was established through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from teachers, students, and documentary evidence, technique triangulation by integrating observation, interviews, and documentation, and time triangulation by collecting data at different periods. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining a clear audit trail documenting each stage of the research process, while confirmability was achieved by ensuring that interpretations were grounded in empirical evidence rather than researcher assumptions. Furthermore, transferability was enhanced by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and instructional processes, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation were also conducted to obtain a deeper understanding of classroom practices and enhance the overall credibility of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Active Learning Strategies in Developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

Active learning strategies in this study refer to instructional approaches employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to actively engage students in constructing knowledge through discussion, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflective inquiry rather than passive information reception. The findings indicate that active learning was operationalized through group discussions, classroom presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and problem-based learning activities that encouraged students to analyze religious issues from multiple perspectives. These instructional activities were intentionally designed to facilitate students' higher-order cognitive processes, including analyzing, evaluating, and generating solutions to contextual problems based on Islamic values. Thus, active learning was not merely used as a teaching method but functioned as a pedagogical strategy to create meaningful learning experiences that promoted students' critical, analytical, and creative thinking throughout the learning process.

The first interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that active learning was deliberately integrated into every lesson to stimulate students' higher-order thinking. The teacher explained, "I rarely rely on lecturing throughout the lesson. Instead, I divide students into small groups and present

contextual cases related to Islamic teachings. They are encouraged to discuss the issues, express different opinions, and defend their arguments using Islamic principles before presenting their conclusions to the class.” This statement demonstrates that the teacher consciously shifted the learning process from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning. From the researcher's perspective, this instructional practice indicates that the teacher views knowledge as something constructed collaboratively through interaction and reasoning rather than transmitted directly. Consequently, students are provided with opportunities to analyze problems, evaluate alternative viewpoints, and formulate reasoned conclusions, which represent the essential cognitive dimensions of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

The second interview with one of the students further confirmed the implementation of active learning strategies during Islamic Religious Education lessons. The student stated, “Learning becomes more interesting because we are asked to discuss real-life problems instead of simply listening to explanations. During group discussions, everyone is encouraged to share ideas, respond to classmates' opinions, and explain why they agree or disagree with a particular argument.” This interview suggests that students experienced meaningful participation throughout the learning process and perceived themselves as active contributors rather than passive recipients of information. The researcher interprets these findings as evidence that collaborative discussion provides students with opportunities to articulate their reasoning, negotiate different perspectives, and develop reflective thinking. Such learning experiences not only strengthen conceptual understanding but also cultivate communication, argumentation, and critical thinking skills, all of which are integral components of HOTS-oriented instruction.

Classroom observations conducted during the Islamic Religious Education lesson on Patience in Daily Life further supported the interview findings. The teacher organized students into several discussion groups and presented a contextual scenario concerning conflict among classmates. Each group was instructed to analyze the causes of the conflict, propose solutions based on Islamic teachings, and present their arguments before receiving feedback from other groups. Throughout the activity, the teacher consistently facilitated discussion by asking probing questions, encouraging students to justify their opinions, and guiding them toward deeper reflection rather than providing direct answers. The researcher observed that students actively exchanged ideas, challenged one another's arguments respectfully, and collaboratively refined their conclusions. These observations indicate that active learning strategies successfully created an interactive learning environment in which students practiced analyzing, evaluating, and constructing knowledge through authentic social interaction, thereby fostering the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Findings on Active Learning Strategies in Developing HOTS

Informant Position		Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Islamic Religious Education Teacher		<i>"Students are asked to discuss contextual Islamic issues, defend their opinions with logical arguments, and present the conclusions of their discussions to the class."</i>	Student-centered learning; collaborative discussion; analytical thinking
Grade XI Student		<i>"Group discussions encourage us to express opinions, respond to different ideas, and explain the reasons behind our answers instead of simply memorizing the material."</i>	Active participation; critical thinking; argumentation skills

Source: Primary Data, 2026.

Table 1 illustrates that both the teacher and the student consistently perceived active learning as an instructional strategy that promotes students' intellectual engagement throughout the learning process. From the teacher's perspective, active learning emphasizes the design of learning experiences that require students to investigate problems, construct arguments, and communicate their reasoning collaboratively. This finding indicates that the teacher's instructional orientation extends beyond knowledge transmission toward facilitating cognitive processes that stimulate analysis, evaluation, and reflective judgment. Such pedagogical practices demonstrate a deliberate effort to align classroom instruction with the principles of HOTS-oriented learning.

The students' responses reinforce this interpretation by demonstrating that active learning creates opportunities for meaningful classroom participation. Rather than merely receiving explanations from the teacher, students reported actively discussing authentic problems, evaluating classmates' opinions, and defending their own arguments using logical reasoning. The consistency between teachers' intentions, students' experiences, and classroom observations strengthens the credibility of the findings through source triangulation. Collectively, these data suggest that active learning contributes not only to students' conceptual understanding of Islamic Religious Education but also to the development of communication skills, collaborative problem-solving, reflective thinking, and independent reasoning, which are fundamental characteristics of Higher Order Thinking Skills.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Influencing the Development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

Supporting and inhibiting factors in this study refer to the internal and external conditions that influence the effectiveness of teachers' instructional strategies in developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) during Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Supporting factors include teachers' pedagogical competence, students' learning engagement, the availability of HOTS-oriented instructional resources, and a conducive school environment that encourages active participation and critical dialogue. Conversely, inhibiting factors comprise limited instructional time, variations in students' cognitive

readiness, inadequate digital learning resources, and the persistence of conventional teaching habits. These factors interact dynamically throughout the instructional process and determine the extent to which HOTS-oriented learning can be implemented effectively. Therefore, understanding both supporting and inhibiting factors is essential for explaining why the implementation of HOTS differs across classrooms despite being guided by the same curriculum and instructional objectives.

The interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that pedagogical competence and students' willingness to participate actively were the most influential supporting factors in implementing HOTS-oriented instruction. The teacher explained, "Students become more active when learning activities are connected with their daily experiences. However, implementing HOTS effectively requires careful lesson planning, sufficient teaching resources, and continuous guidance because not every student immediately demonstrates critical thinking." The researcher interprets this statement as evidence that successful HOTS implementation depends not only on teachers' conceptual understanding of HOTS but also on their ability to design contextual learning experiences that gradually develop students' analytical and reflective thinking. Furthermore, the teacher acknowledged that instructional competence alone is insufficient without adequate institutional support and students' active engagement throughout the learning process.

The second interview with a Grade XI student provided additional evidence regarding factors affecting HOTS implementation. The student stated, "Group discussions help us think more critically because everyone can express different opinions. However, sometimes the discussion cannot continue because the lesson time is limited, and some classmates are still hesitant to speak." This finding indicates that students recognize collaborative learning as an effective strategy for improving critical thinking while simultaneously experiencing practical constraints that reduce learning effectiveness. From the researcher's perspective, this interview illustrates that the development of HOTS is strongly influenced by students' cognitive readiness and classroom learning conditions. Differences in confidence, communication skills, and learning motivation create varying levels of participation, requiring teachers to employ adaptive instructional strategies that accommodate diverse student characteristics while maintaining meaningful classroom interaction.

Classroom observations further confirmed the interview findings. During Islamic Religious Education lessons, the researcher observed that the teacher successfully created an interactive classroom atmosphere by encouraging students to discuss contextual issues, present arguments, and respond to their peers' opinions. Most students actively participated in collaborative discussions and demonstrated the ability to analyze problems from multiple perspectives. Nevertheless, several students remained passive and required additional encouragement before contributing to classroom discussions. The researcher also observed that some planned discussion activities could not be completed because of limited instructional time, requiring the teacher to shorten reflective

discussions and classroom presentations. These observations indicate that while supportive learning environments and competent teachers facilitate HOTS development, practical constraints related to time allocation and student readiness continue to limit the optimal implementation of higher-order thinking activities.

Table 2. Interview Findings on Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Affecting HOTS Development

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Islamic Religious Education Teacher	<i>"Students become more active when learning is connected to real-life situations. However, implementing HOTS requires sufficient time, careful lesson planning, and appropriate learning resources."</i>	Pedagogical competence; contextual learning; instructional resources; time limitation
Grade XI Student	<i>"Group discussions help us think critically, but some students are still reluctant to participate, and discussions are sometimes interrupted because of limited class time."</i>	Active participation; cognitive readiness; collaborative learning; time constraint

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The interview findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate that teachers and students perceive the implementation of HOTS from complementary perspectives. The teacher primarily emphasized institutional and pedagogical dimensions, highlighting that successful HOTS implementation depends on teachers' professional competence, careful instructional planning, contextual learning design, and adequate educational resources. These findings suggest that teachers function not merely as knowledge transmitters but as instructional designers responsible for creating learning environments that stimulate students' higher-order cognitive processes. Therefore, teacher competence emerges as the principal supporting factor influencing the quality of HOTS-oriented instruction.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers promoted Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) through active learning, contextual instruction, higher-order questioning, interactive discussion, and authentic assessment (Isnaini & Jannah, 2024). These findings support Rahman (2026), who found that interactive discussion and problem-based learning enhance students' critical engagement and analytical reasoning (Agustina et al., 2025; Musanna et al., 2025). Likewise, Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised Bloom's Taxonomy highlights analyzing, evaluating, and creating as advanced cognitive processes (Suhiroh et al., 2023). Unlike previous studies focusing on individual instructional models, this research shows that HOTS development depends on the systematic integration of complementary instructional strategies across planning, classroom interaction, and assessment (Lestari et al., 2025). This finding extends constructivist learning theory by emphasizing that meaningful cognitive development emerges through coherent pedagogical design.

Practically, it suggests that teachers should integrate multiple instructional approaches rather than relying on isolated teaching methods.

Contextual learning also played an important role in helping students connect Islamic teachings with authentic social experiences, promoting deeper cognitive processing and reflective thinking (Mawarni et al., 2025; Muhammad et al., 2025). This finding supports Fitroni (2024), who argued that contextual learning enables students to analyze contemporary issues using Islamic values and formulate practical solutions (Fitria & Nafiah, 2025; Umah, 2025). It also reflects the Islamic principle of *tadabbur*, encouraging believers to contemplate and internalize religious teachings before applying them in daily life (QS. Muhammad: 24). However, this study demonstrates that contextual learning becomes more effective when combined with collaborative discussion and higher-order questioning. Such integration enables students to evaluate different perspectives, justify their reasoning, and strengthen reflective judgment. These findings expand contextual learning theory within Islamic Religious Education while providing practical guidance for connecting religious concepts with students' real-life experiences (Farwa et al., 2026; Hidayati, 2024; Maisyanah et al., 2024).

Another important finding concerns the establishment of an interactive classroom climate that encouraged students to express opinions, challenge arguments respectfully, and participate in collaborative discussions. This finding supports Wicaksono and Sugiharto (2021), who emphasized that dialogic classrooms are essential for developing higher-order thinking skills (Abadiga et al., 2025; Ayuningrum et al., 2024). However, this study extends previous research by showing that students' critical participation depends not only on classroom atmosphere but also on teachers' facilitation skills in guiding discussions, asking probing questions, and appreciating diverse viewpoints. These interactions indicate that critical thinking develops through continuous social negotiation, consistent with social constructivist theory (Aisih et al., 2025; Rafi et al., 2025). Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening teachers' competencies in facilitating discussions, managing classroom interaction, and creating psychologically safe learning environments that encourage evidence-based argumentation.

Despite these positive findings, several barriers limited the optimal implementation of HOTS-oriented learning, including limited instructional time, diverse student readiness, and persistent conventional teaching practices. These findings are consistent with Rahmawati (2024) and Hidayat (2022), who identified curricular demands and time constraints as major challenges (Adzim, 2025; Panuntun et al., 2025; Safitri et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this study shows that such obstacles can be minimized when teachers possess strong pedagogical competence and apply adaptive instructional strategies responsive to students' diverse needs. Teacher professionalism therefore functions as a mediating factor that reduces contextual limitations. Theoretically, HOTS implementation should be viewed as the result of interactions among teacher competence, learner characteristics, instructional resources, and institutional support (Akib et al.,

2025; Laila et al., 2026). Practically, policymakers should strengthen professional development, improve learning resources, and provide more flexible instructional schedules.

Finally, HOTS-oriented assessment through analytical and case-based evaluation emerged as a significant contribution of this study. Consistent with Jamilah (2025), authentic assessment encourages students to demonstrate analytical reasoning, evaluate complex situations, and formulate contextual solutions rather than simply recalling factual knowledge (Puspitasari, 2025; Sucipto et al., 2025). However, this research further shows that assessment functions not only as a measurement tool but also as an instructional strategy reinforcing higher-order thinking throughout learning. The integration of instructional planning, classroom interaction, contextual learning, and authentic assessment forms a coherent HOTS-oriented pedagogical framework. Theoretically, these findings enrich Islamic Religious Education by emphasizing the alignment of instructional components in developing HOTS. Practically, they provide guidance for teachers, school leaders, and curriculum developers seeking to improve learning quality in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Islamic Religious Education is fundamentally determined by teachers' ability to design and implement integrated instructional strategies rather than relying on a single teaching method. The findings reveal that active learning, higher-order questioning, contextual learning, interactive discussion, diverse learning resources, and authentic HOTS-based assessment collectively create meaningful learning experiences that foster students' analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking. The primary lesson derived from this research is that HOTS can be effectively cultivated when teachers function as facilitators who actively engage students in reflective inquiry and collaborative knowledge construction. Academically, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic Religious Education by proposing a comprehensive pedagogical framework that integrates instructional planning, classroom interaction, contextual learning, and assessment as interconnected components of HOTS-oriented instruction. Nevertheless, this research was limited to a single case study conducted in one Islamic senior secondary school, thereby restricting the generalizability of its findings. Future studies are recommended to involve multiple educational settings, employ mixed-method or comparative research designs, and examine the long-term impact of teachers' instructional strategies on students' higher-order thinking skills across diverse educational contexts.

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