

The Role of the Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an as a Medium for Developing Students' Talents and Interests

Achmad Zulfahmi, Syahidah Rena

Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an Jakarta, Indonesia

Email : achmad.zulfahmi@mhs.iiq.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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* Achmad Zulfahmi

Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an (MFQ) is a distinctive branch of Qur'anic competition that assesses not only memorization but, more importantly, participants' comprehension of the Qur'an, Hadith, and broader Islamic knowledge. Beyond a mere contest, MFQ functions as an educational medium capable of developing students' intellectual, spiritual, and social competencies. This article examines the role of MFQ as a medium for developing students' talents and interests by analyzing its theoretical foundations, pedagogical contributions, and impacts on students' cognitive, affective, and interpersonal development. Using a qualitative library research approach, the study reveals that MFQ cultivates critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and students' motivation to engage with religious sciences. Furthermore, participation in MFQ strengthens self-confidence and Islamic identity among learners. Practical recommendations are offered, including integrating MFQ into the curriculum, providing systematic teacher training, and establishing sustainable institutional collaboration. Ultimately, MFQ is expected to evolve from a purely competitive activity into a holistic educational process that strengthens academic skills while shaping students' character grounded in faith-based values.

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INTRODUCTION

Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an (MFQ) has increasingly been recognized as an educational medium that extends far beyond the traditional practice of Qur'anic memorization (*ḥifẓ*) (Abdurrauf & Chamidah, 2025; Ashoumi et al., 2025; Yahaya et al., 2024). Unlike conventional Qur'anic competitions that primarily assess recitation or vocal performance, MFQ places greater emphasis on participants' intellectual engagement with the Qur'an, Hadith, and broader Islamic sciences (Tengah, 2023). This distinctive characteristic positions MFQ not merely as a competitive event but as a holistic pedagogical tool capable of nurturing cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of student development (Lubis & Mahariah, 2024).

The growing prominence of MFQ reflects a paradigm shift in contemporary Qur'anic education, which increasingly demands that learners not only preserve sacred texts but also comprehend, interpret, contextualize, and apply their meanings to modern life challenges (Alisah et al., 2025; Nurani et al., 2022; Shihab, 2012). This shift aligns with broader educational goals that prioritize higher-order thinking skills, including critical analysis, argumentation, and communicative competence, over rote learning alone (Indonesia, 2022). Consequently, MFQ serves as a bridge between traditional Islamic scholarship and the competencies required in twenty-first-century education (Ahmadi & Saad, 2024).

Within both formal institutions (schools and madrasahs) and non-formal settings (pesantren and Qur'anic study circles), MFQ functions as an innovative platform for identifying and cultivating diverse student talents (Husni et al., 2025). Through its comprehensive format—which includes rapid-response questioning, verse interpretation, and general Islamic knowledge—MFQ enables educators to discover potential in analytical thinking, public speaking, teamwork, and leadership that may remain undetected in conventional classroom instruction (Barat, 2022). This identification process is consistent with educational principles emphasizing structured training and opportunities for students to demonstrate their competencies (Indonesia, 2022).

Moreover, MFQ provides a structured and collaborative learning environment that enhances students' motivation, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility toward preserving and disseminating Islamic values (Azmi & Istiqomah, 2025; Kahfi et al., 2025). Working in teams to solve problems, answer questions, and articulate understanding within a competitive yet educationally oriented atmosphere equips students with essential interpersonal and leadership skills (Nur'aini, 2020). Such experiences are critical in preparing learners to navigate academic, social, and spiritual challenges in their future lives.

This article aims to examine the multifaceted role of MFQ as a medium for developing students' talents and interests. Specifically, it analyzes the theoretical foundations of MFQ, its pedagogical contributions, and its practical impact on students' cognitive, affective, and social development. Furthermore, the article offers recommendations regarding the integration of MFQ into school curricula, systematic teacher training, and sustainable institutional collaboration, thereby positioning MFQ as a transformative educational process that fosters a balance between knowledge and faith.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach through a literature review (library research) to examine the role of Musabaqah Fahmil

Qur'an (MFQ) as a medium for developing students' talents and interests. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, including official guidelines issued by the Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an (LPTQ) at both provincial and national levels (Barat, 2022; Tengah, 2023), government policy documents on student talent and interest development (Indonesia, 2022), as well as relevant academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. The selection of sources was guided by their relevance to Qur'anic literacy, talent identification, collaborative learning, and Islamic pedagogical frameworks.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and interpreting information across several key dimensions: (1) the theoretical foundations of MFQ as an assessment and extracurricular activity, (2) its pedagogical contributions to cognitive, affective, and social development, (3) practical implementation strategies in formal and non-formal educational settings, and (4) existing challenges along with proposed solutions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This analytical framework enabled the researchers to synthesize findings from diverse sources into a coherent discussion that positions MFQ not merely as a competitive event but as a transformative educational process fostering a balance between academic competence and faith-based character formation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Theoretical Framework of MFQ as a Talent Development Medium

Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an (MFQ) is fundamentally distinct from other Qur'anic competition branches because it emphasizes participants' intellectual engagement rather than mere memorization or vocal performance. The competition format typically involves quick-response questioning, verse interpretation, and general Islamic knowledge, thereby functioning simultaneously as a competitive event and as a formative and summative assessment tool (Tengah, 2023). This dual function positions MFQ as a pedagogically rich activity that can identify, nurture, and evaluate students' competencies in Qur'anic studies. From an assessment perspective, MFQ measures not only recall but also comprehension, analysis, and application of Islamic knowledge in contextual settings (Barat, 2022). Consequently, MFQ aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize authentic, competency-based evaluation over rote testing.

The theoretical justification for MFQ as a talent development medium is further reinforced by the theory of Multiple Intelligences. Although originally

proposed by Gardner, the application of this framework in Islamic educational settings has gained renewed scholarly attention in recent years, particularly regarding how Qur'anic activities stimulate linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences simultaneously (Alwiyah & Syarif, 2025; Fakhrurozi et al., 2025; Mahmud et al., 2024; Nurmansyah, 2024). MFQ specifically activates linguistic intelligence through verse articulation and interpretation, logical intelligence through analytical reasoning and argumentation, and interpersonal intelligence through team-based problem solving. This multidimensional stimulation ensures that students with diverse cognitive profiles can find entry points for engagement and growth. Thus, MFQ provides a more inclusive platform for talent identification than single-skill assessments (Albaraq et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the principles of talent and interest development articulated by the Ministry of Education emphasize that effective cultivation requires three sequential processes: systematic identification, structured training, and opportunities for performance and recognition (Indonesia, 2022). MFQ inherently incorporates all three elements within its organizational structure. Students are first identified through participation, then trained through structured preparation materials covering verse analysis, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and Arabic grammar fundamentals (Barat, 2022), and finally given opportunities to demonstrate their competencies in competitive settings. This alignment between MFQ's structure and established educational principles confirms its legitimacy as a comprehensive talent development medium rather than a mere extracurricular activity.

Talent and Interest Identification Through MFQ Participation

The analysis of MFQ's operational framework reveals that participation in this competition serves as an effective mechanism for identifying students' latent potentials in Qur'anic studies. Unlike conventional classroom assessments that primarily measure memorization capacity, MFQ's multifaceted format—including rapid-response rounds, interpretive tasks, and team-based problem solving—enables educators to observe diverse competencies that might otherwise remain undetected (Tengah, 2023). Students who excel in analytical reasoning, public speaking, or collaborative leadership may not distinguish themselves in standard written examinations but can demonstrate exceptional abilities within MFQ's dynamic format. This broader identification capacity is particularly valuable in Islamic educational institutions that seek to nurture well-rounded graduates.

Moreover, sustained involvement in MFQ training has been shown to strengthen and expand students' interest in Qur'anic sciences progressively. The

structured preparation phase, which includes systematic study of verse interpretation, prophetic traditions, and Islamic jurisprudence, exposes students to intellectual challenges that stimulate curiosity and deepen engagement (Barat, 2022). Recognition received at school or regional levels further reinforces this interest by providing students with a sense of achievement and belonging. The cyclical relationship between participation, skill development, and recognition creates a self-sustaining motivational loop that transforms initial curiosity into long-term commitment to Islamic learning (Indonesia, 2022).

Table 1. Synthesis of Talent Domains Identified Through MFQ Activities				
No.	Talent Domain	MFQ Activity That Reveals It		Educational Significance
1	Analytical and critical thinking	Quick-response questioning; verse analysis		Develops higher-order reasoning and argumentation skills
2	Linguistic and communicative competence	Articulation of interpretations before audiences		Strengthens public speaking and structured expression
3	Teamwork and collaboration	Team-based rounds	competition	Builds interpersonal skills and shared responsibility
4	Leadership and strategic thinking	Role division and management competition	and time during	Cultivates decision-making and peer guidance abilities

Table 1 synthesizes the five primary talent domains that MFQ activities are designed to reveal and develop, based on the official competition guidelines and syllabi issued by LPTQ at provincial and national levels. Each domain corresponds to specific MFQ activities, demonstrating that the competition format is intentionally structured to assess multiple competencies simultaneously. The educational significance column illustrates how each identified talent translates into broader developmental outcomes beyond the competition itself. This synthesis confirms that MFQ operates as a multidimensional identification instrument rather than a single-skill test (Rahtikawati & Afifi, 2021). The diversity of domains also suggests that MFQ can accommodate students with varied cognitive strengths, consistent with Multiple Intelligences principles (Fakhrurozi et al., 2025).

Cognitive, Affective, and Social Impacts of MFQ

The literature analysis reveals that MFQ participation generates significant cognitive impacts, particularly in deepening students' understanding of the Qur'an and enhancing their critical thinking abilities. Through systematic training in verse interpretation, contextual analysis, and Islamic knowledge

application, students develop the capacity to construct reasoned arguments and defend their positions using textual evidence (Tengah, 2023). The quick-response format specifically trains mental agility, retrieval accuracy, and the ability to synthesize information rapidly under pressure. These cognitive gains extend beyond the religious domain, as the analytical habits cultivated through MFQ preparation transfer to other academic subjects. Thus, MFQ functions as a cognitive training system that develops transferable intellectual skills (Barat, 2022).

In the affective and social domains, MFQ contributes to strengthening students' intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, Islamic identity, and interpersonal competencies. The competitive format combined with public recognition provides students with a sense of achievement that encourages continued engagement with Islamic sciences (Indonesia, 2022). Socially, the team-based structure of MFQ naturally cultivates cooperation, discipline, sportsmanship, and leadership as students must coordinate roles, manage disagreements, and support one another under time pressure. The ethical dimension of competition learning to accept judgments gracefully and respect opponents further contributes to character formation. These affective and social outcomes demonstrate that MFQ's educational value transcends its competitive surface.

Table 2. Summary of MFQ Impacts Across Three Developmental Domains

Developmental Domain	Specific Impact	Supporting Mechanism in MFQ
Cognitive	Deepened Qur'anic comprehension; enhanced critical thinking and analytical reasoning	Verse interpretation tasks; quick-response rounds; argumentation practice
Affective	Increased motivation; strengthened Islamic identity and self-confidence	Public recognition; achievement awards; stage performance experience
Social and Character	Discipline; sportsmanship; teamwork; leadership; ethical competitiveness	Team-based format; training schedules; adherence to competition ethics

Table 2 provides a consolidated overview of MFQ's impacts across the three developmental domains identified in this study. The cognitive domain is primarily developed through interpretive and analytical tasks, while the affective domain is nurtured through recognition systems and performance opportunities. The social and character domain emerges from the collaborative and rule-governed nature of team competition. This tripartite structure demonstrates that MFQ addresses student development holistically rather than focusing on a single dimension. The interconnectedness of these domains suggests that improvements in one area tend to reinforce growth in others, creating a synergistic developmental effect.

Collaborative Learning and Character Formation

The team-based structure of MFQ creates an authentic context for collaborative learning that is difficult to replicate in individualistic classroom settings. During preparation and competition, team members must divide roles according to individual strengths, discuss answers rapidly, negotiate disagreements respectfully, and provide emotional support under considerable time pressure (Tengah, 2023). This process mirrors real-world professional collaboration and equips students with transferable interpersonal competencies. Leadership emerges organically as more experienced participants guide junior members through complex materials, creating a peer-mentoring dynamic that reinforces both the mentor's and the mentee's understanding. Such collaborative experiences align with contemporary pedagogical emphasis on social constructivism in learning.

Character formation constitutes another significant outcome of MFQ participation, operating through the internalization of discipline, integrity, and ethical competitiveness. Students who undergo rigorous training schedules develop habits of punctuality, perseverance, and self-regulation that extend beyond the competition context. The requirement to accept judges' decisions gracefully and to celebrate competitors' achievements cultivates sportsmanship and emotional maturity. Furthermore, the responsibility of representing one's school or institution instills a sense of accountability and collective pride (Indonesia, 2022). These character traits, developed through repeated participation, contribute to forming students who are not only intellectually competent but also morally grounded.

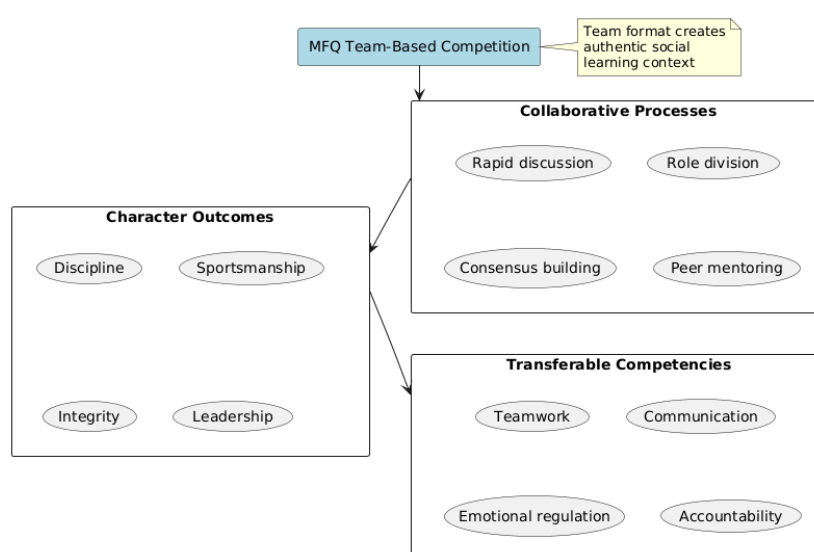


Figure 1. Diagram of Collaborative Learning and Character Development Through MFQ

Figure 1 illustrates the developmental pathway through which MFQ's team-based structure generates collaborative processes, which in turn produce character outcomes and transferable competencies. The diagram shows that the competition format is not an endpoint but a catalyst that initiates a cascade of social and moral learning. The collaborative processes—role division, rapid discussion, consensus building, and peer mentoring—serve as the active mechanisms through which character traits are internalized. The resulting competencies extend beyond the competition into students' broader academic and social lives. This visual representation confirms that MFQ's character education function is structurally embedded in its format rather than being an incidental byproduct.

Implementation Strategies in Educational Institutions

The analysis of institutional practices reveals several key strategies for integrating MFQ into the educational ecosystem effectively. The most fundamental approach is curriculum integration, whereby MFQ preparation materials are embedded within Islamic Education (PAI) courses and extracurricular programs to ensure continuity throughout the academic year (Barat, 2022). Schools that adopt this approach report more consistent student engagement compared to those treating MFQ as a standalone seasonal event. Additionally, collaboration with LPTQ at provincial and national levels provides access to official syllabi, standardized scoring systems, and technical guidelines that ensure quality and consistency in coaching. This institutional partnership bridges the gap between school-level activities and the broader Qur'anic competition ecosystem.

Teacher and coach capacity building represents another critical implementation strategy. Educators require specific pedagogical training in Qur'anic comprehension methodology, competition coaching techniques, and student motivation management to guide MFQ participants effectively (Tengah, 2023). Schools that invest in periodic workshops and certification programs for their coaches demonstrate significantly better student outcomes than those relying on self-trained or volunteer mentors. Furthermore, the adoption of tiered development pathways—progressing from class-level practice through school selection, regional competition, and national stages—ensures that talent cultivation is systematic and progressive rather than sporadic. Documentation through portfolios and achievement records enables continuous monitoring and evidence-based program improvement (Indonesia, 2022).

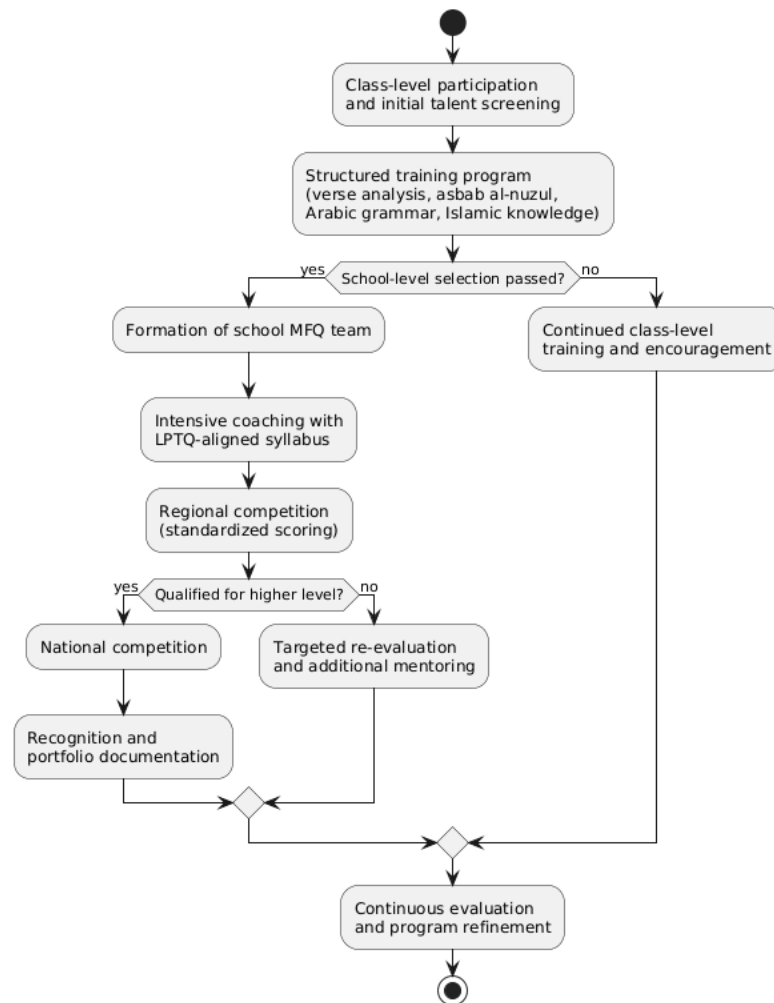


Figure 2. Activity Diagram of the Tiered MFQ Development Pathway

Figure 2 maps the tiered development pathway that educational institutions implement to nurture MFQ talents progressively. The process begins with broad class-level participation for initial screening and advances through increasingly selective stages toward regional and national competitions. Importantly, the diagram illustrates that students who do not pass selection at any stage are not excluded but are redirected to continued training and additional mentoring, ensuring inclusive development. The final evaluation stage creates a feedback loop that informs subsequent cycles of coaching and program design. This structured pathway demonstrates that effective MFQ implementation requires long-term institutional commitment rather than ad hoc preparation.

Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Despite its demonstrated educational value, MFQ implementation faces several persistent challenges that require systematic attention. The most frequently identified constraint is the limited availability of coaches with

adequate competence in both Qur'anic sciences and competition pedagogy (Barat, 2022). Many educational institutions, particularly in rural areas, lack access to qualified mentors who can guide students through the analytical and interpretive demands of MFQ. Additionally, an excessive emphasis on winning rather than learning processes has been observed to generate anxiety among participants and distort the educational purpose of the competition. Insufficient supporting facilities, including the absence of dedicated training rooms and comprehensive reference materials, further compound these difficulties.

To address these challenges, several complementary solutions have been proposed and partially implemented across institutions. Periodic coach training programs organized in collaboration with LPTQ offices aim to upgrade both subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical competence among educators (Tengah, 2023). Shifting the evaluative focus from victory-oriented outcomes to process-oriented learning helps preserve students' intrinsic motivation and reduces performance anxiety. The integration of digital learning resources—including online question banks, video-based tafsir lectures, and interactive practice platforms—has proven effective in mitigating the scarcity of physical materials, particularly in under-resourced schools (Indonesia, 2022). These digital tools also enable students to practice independently outside formal training sessions.

The effectiveness of these solutions depends critically on their implementation as an integrated system rather than as isolated interventions. Institutions that combine coach training, process-oriented evaluation, digital resource adoption, and strong LPTQ partnerships report the most sustainable and productive MFQ programs. Conversely, schools that implement only one or two strategies without addressing the broader ecosystem continue to experience fluctuating participation and inconsistent performance. Ultimately, transforming MFQ from a seasonal competition into a continuous educational process requires coordinated commitment from educators, school administrators, religious institutions, and government bodies. When these stakeholders align their efforts, MFQ fulfills its potential as a holistic medium for developing students' intellectual, spiritual, and social competencies simultaneously.

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CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an (MFQ) functions not merely as a competitive event but as a comprehensive educational medium capable of developing students' talents and interests across multiple dimensions. Through its distinctive format which integrates Qur'anic comprehension, Hadith knowledge, Islamic jurisprudence, and general religious

literacy MFQ provides a structured environment in which students' cognitive, affective, and social competencies are simultaneously cultivated. The findings confirm that when implemented systematically through early talent identification, structured coaching programs, and sustained institutional collaboration, MFQ contributes significantly to holistic student development. Specifically, it enhances critical thinking and analytical reasoning, strengthens intrinsic motivation and Islamic identity, and fosters interpersonal skills such as teamwork, leadership, discipline, and ethical competitiveness. These outcomes collectively affirm that MFQ occupies a unique pedagogical position at the intersection of Qur'anic education, character formation, and competency-based assessment.

Beyond its immediate educational benefits, MFQ holds considerable potential to evolve from a seasonal competition into a continuous and transformative educational process. This transformation requires coordinated commitment from educators, school administrators, Qur'anic institutions, and government bodies to integrate MFQ materials into curricula, provide systematic teacher training, and establish tiered development pathways from classroom to national level. When such institutional support is in place, MFQ enables students to explore their intellectual and spiritual capacities while strengthening their identity as a young Muslim generation with meaningful engagement with the Qur'an. Ultimately, MFQ serves as a strategic instrument for preparing students to navigate the complexities of contemporary life equipped with knowledge, faith, and strong moral character, thereby fulfilling the broader educational aspiration of producing individuals who balance academic excellence with spiritual integrity.

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