

## INNOVATIVE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT FOR ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS LEARNING: INTEGRATION OF 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES

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### Abstract :

*This research aims to explore the implementation of 21st-century competency principles in Islamic learning at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro, with a particular focus on improving students' critical thinking skills through the use of HOTS questions, giving rewards, and peer tutoring methods. The background to this research is based on the urgent need to reform the education system to suit global demands and prepare students to face future challenges. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with a field study approach involving observation, interviews, and documentation to collect relevant data. The research results showed that applying HOTS questions, rewards, and peer tutoring significantly improved students' critical thinking skills. This method also contributes to forming students' character, including increasing their sense of responsibility, empathy, and the ability to communicate and collaborate. In conclusion, integrating 21st-century competencies in Islamic learning enriches students' academic understanding and improves their character.*

### Abstrak:

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi prinsip kompetensi abad 21 dalam pembelajaran agama Islam di MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro, dengan fokus khusus pada peningkatan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa melalui penggunaan soal HOTS, pemberian reward, dan metode peer tutoring. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada kebutuhan mendesak untuk melakukan reformasi sistem pendidikan agar sesuai dengan tuntutan global dan mempersiapkan siswa menghadapi tantangan masa depan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pendekatan studi lapangan yang melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi untuk mengumpulkan data yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan soal HOTS, reward, dan peer tutoring secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa. Metode ini juga berkontribusi dalam membentuk karakter siswa, termasuk meningkatkan rasa tanggung jawab, empati, serta kemampuan berkomunikasi dan berkolaborasi. Kesimpulannya, mengintegrasikan kompetensi abad*

## INTRODUCTION

21st-century education is applied in Indonesia to equip the nation's next generation to have a good life in the future (Santika, 2021; Afifah et al., 2022; Almubaroq, 2023). If current education still uses the pattern of education in the past, students will need help to face the life of their environment in the future. This can be seen from the rapid changes in various aspects of life, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental, which require new relevant skills and knowledge (Ridho et al., 2022; Ristanti, 2023; Zuhri et al., 2022). Therefore, implementing 21st-century education is crucial to ensure that Indonesia's young generation is ready to face future challenges with adequate provisions.

The change in the human mindset of the 21st century demands a significant change in national education, which is closely related to education management (Santoso & Murod, 2021; Mintchik et al., 2021; Sanjani, 2024). Our education is a legacy of the old system that focused on memorizing meaningless facts, demonstrating the need for management reform to adopt a more relevant and dynamic approach (Rahman et al., 2022). Changing Indonesia's education system is challenging, given its enormous scale: around 30 million students, 200 thousand educational institutions, and 4 million educators spread over an area the size of the European continent (Olanrewaju & Afolabi, 2022). Education management must handle this complexity and ensure resource distribution, training of educators, and effective curriculum implementation (Madondo, 2021). This change is imperative so we can handle changing global times. 21st-century skills, first developed in 2007 in the United States to prepare its citizens for workplace demands, have improved educational outcomes and greatly benefit students and teachers (Tight, 2021). Education management needs to integrate 21st-century skills into the education system to ensure the relevance and quality of education (Amzaleg & Masry-Herzallah, 2022; Maulidia & Sanjani, 2023). Recognizing the importance of these skills for future careers, many other countries are improving their education systems by incorporating 21st-century skills into learning. This step should also be adopted by education management in Indonesia.

Innovative educational management for Islamic religious learning that integrates 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, can enhance students' understanding of religious values as well as their ability to face global challenges (Jannah & Puspita, 2023; Arwitaningsih et al., 2023; Khairunnisa et al., 2024). Research shows that innovations in education management, such as information technology and project-based learning approaches, can increase student engagement and learning effectiveness (Faiz, 2023; Gupta, 2022; Juuti et al., 2021). According to a UNESCO report, education systems that are not adaptive to changing times can hinder the development of students, making education management reform crucial (Niemi, 2021). Case studies in Malaysia and Indonesia show that integrating 21st-century learning technologies and methodologies in Islamic religious education can significantly improve student

learning outcomes (Hartati et al., 2022). Teachers play a crucial role in implementing innovative educational management, and training and professional development for teachers is essential to ensure the success of this integration (Kilag et al., 2023; Purwanto et al., 2023). Despite challenges such as resistance to change and limited resources, appropriate management strategies and policy support can help overcome these barriers, ensuring a relevant and high-quality Islamic religious education system.

The novelty of this article is that it identifies the need for education management reform to support the integration of 21st-century competencies, demonstrating an approach that focuses on systems and policy, not just teaching methodologies. In this case, education management views religious subjects as necessary in education. This approach highlights the importance of the innovative role of education management in creating a framework that enables the integration of 21st-century skills in Islamic religious learning. Thus, this article offers a new perspective on how education management can be optimized to improve the quality of Islamic religious education, emphasizing the need for supportive policies and adaptive management structures in the face of global changes and challenges.

This study aims to identify the need for education management reform in MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar to support the integration of 21st-century competencies and demonstrate an approach that focuses on systems and policies, not just teaching methodologies. This research aims to underscore the importance of innovative education management in creating a framework that enables the integration of 21st-century skills in Islamic religious learning.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This descriptive qualitative research aims to explore, build, or explain the implementation of 21st-century learning principles in Islamic lessons at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas, Bojonegoro. This research belongs to the category of field research, where more data is used and collected directly from the field (Matta, 2022). This research design uses a phenomenological study design, which seeks to describe the phenomenon of implementing 21st-century learning in detail and depth. In this study, researchers will examine implementing 21st-century learning skills in Islamic religious studies.

Efforts to obtain valid data require appropriate methods so there are no deviations from the actual situation. This study uses several techniques in collecting data, considering that the data to be obtained consists of various types. In extracting data from predetermined sources, data collection techniques function as a working tool (Köhler et al., 2022). The techniques used in this study include observation, interview, and documentation methods. Observation methods are used to observe phenomena in the field directly, interview methods are used to obtain in-depth information from relevant respondents, and documentation methods are used to collect written or visual data related to the research topic. Combining these techniques is expected to provide comprehensive and accurate data so that the study results can better describe the actual condition.

After the data in the field is complete, be it from observations, interviews, documentation, or literature studies, the next stage is to analyze all the data obtained. The steps are as follows: first, data reduction, which involves recording in the field and summarizing by looking for important things that can reveal the theme of the problem. Data reduction steps are carried out by selecting and recapping the data that has been collected, then classifying it according to the purpose of the study, which is to find out how the efforts of teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, in shaping the character of students at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro. Second, data display categorizes data in units of analysis based on the focus and aspects of the problem under study, or data sets and field reports, so that researchers can see the overall picture and draw the correct conclusion. It was the third step, concluding and verifying, which is the last step in concluding and proving new data that allows for the validity of research results to be obtained.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Improved Critical Thinking Skills in Religious Studies**

The implementation of 21st-century competency principles in Islamic Religious Education learning, including Fiqh, Aqidah Akhlak, Quran Hadith, and Islamic Cultural History at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro, shows significant results in improving the quality of learning. These principles include critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills (Haryani et al., 2021). In Fiqh lessons, students are invited to analyze cases of Islamic law and discuss solutions in groups, thus improving critical and collaborative thinking skills. In the *Aqidah Akhlak* subject, project-based learning methods are used to develop projects emphasizing ethical and moral values, encouraging creativity and practical application of the concepts learned. Learning Quran Hadith involves using digital applications to help students understand sacred texts more profoundly and interactively, strengthening digital literacy and communication. Meanwhile, Islamic Cultural History is taught through a narrative and dramatic approach, where students conduct research and presentations on important figures in Islamic history, honing their skills in communication and collaboration (Rokhmawan et al., 2022; Arifin et al., 2024). This implementation enriches students' understanding of the subject matter and prepares them with relevant skills to face future global challenges.

In carrying out Fiqh learning at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar, for example, various learning methods and models are applied to increase student effectiveness and engagement. Methods used include lectures, discussions, Q&A, recitations, group study, and field trips designed to accommodate students' learning styles and enrich their learning experience. In addition, teachers also apply learning models such as contextual learning, which connects subject matter with the context of students' daily lives; problem-solving, which encourages students to solve problems independently and creatively; and inquiry, which emphasizes the process of investigation and discovery. Varied learning approaches, such as scientific approaches that involve scientific steps in learning, an individual approach that takes into account the needs and abilities of each student, a classical approach that involves the whole class in the learning process,

and mastery learning that ensures each student achieves complete mastery of the material before moving on to the next topic, is also applied to ensure that learning takes place comprehensively and inclusively.

Improving critical thinking skills in Religion lessons at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar is carried out through the use of HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions. These questions are designed to challenge students to think more deeply and analytically. For example, students are tasked with analyzing verses of the Quran or hadith, evaluating their relevance in modern life, and developing arguments based on their interpretation. Thus, HOTS questions test students' factual knowledge and ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create solutions based on the provided information. This approach helps students develop critical thinking skills for understanding and applying religious principles in everyday life.

To encourage improving critical thinking skills in religious studies, MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar also applies rewards or awards. These awards can be honors, certificates, or small prizes for students demonstrating exceptional critical thinking skills in answering questions or completing assignments. Rewards serve as external motivation that encourages students to participate actively and try harder in the learning process. With rewards, students feel rewarded for their efforts and achievements, increasing self-confidence and motivation to continue developing critical thinking skills.

In addition to HOTS and reward questions, applying peer tutors is an effective strategy for improving critical thinking skills in Religion lessons at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar. In this method, students who are more proficient or excel in Religion subjects are responsible for helping their peers with difficulties. Peer tutors not only strengthen the understanding of the assisted student but also enrich the tutor's communication and collaboration skills. Peer tutors explain, facilitate discussions, and encourage other students to think critically through challenging questions. This way, tutors and assisted students benefit equally, deepen their understanding of the material, and develop better critical thinking skills.



**Figure 1. Skills Improvement Chart**

Improved Critical Thinking Skills can be fostered through various educational strategies such as higher-order thinking Skills (HOTS) questions, rewards systems, and peer teaching. HOTS questions challenge students to

analyze, evaluate, and create, encouraging deeper cognitive engagement and the application of knowledge rather than simple recall. Reward systems can reinforce critical thinking behaviors by recognizing and incentivizing analytical reasoning and problem-solving. Peer teaching enhances understanding through active explanation and cultivates critical thinking by prompting students to justify their ideas and engage in constructive debate with their peers, thereby developing their ability to evaluate multiple perspectives and solutions. Together, these approaches create a dynamic learning environment that nurtures and enhances students' critical thinking abilities.

### **Implications for Student Character Building**

Applying HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions in Islamic learning at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro significantly impacts student development. The impact that arises, among others, is an increase in critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and student involvement in the learning process. HOTS questions encourage students to think more deeply and analytically, memorizing facts and analyzing, evaluating, and creating solutions based on the information provided. It develops critical thinking skills essential in understanding and applying religious principles in everyday life (Sejati et al., 2021; Sanjani et al., 2023). Students also learn to face problems with a logical and structured approach, find practical solutions, and apply their knowledge in real situations. High involvement in the learning process is also seen because HOTS questions are often more exciting and challenging than ordinary questions, so students become more motivated and satisfied with their learning experience.

In addition, the application of HOTS questions also encourages creativity and develops students' argument skills. Students are often asked to create something new based on their knowledge, encouraging them to think creatively, develop innovative ideas, and explore possibilities in solving problems or answering questions. Strong argument skills are also honed because students must compile logical and evidence-based arguments in answering HOTS questions. It is essential in Islamic religious studies and various academic and social life aspects. By habitually answering HOTS questions, students learn not to take information for granted without analysis, thus fostering a positive, critical, and skeptical attitude. They become more critical and skeptical in a positive sense, constantly questioning and looking for evidence before accepting information as truth. Overall, using HOTS questions helps shape students into critical, creative, and higher-order thinking individuals ready to face future challenges with better skills.

The provision of rewards for learning Islam at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro has significant implications for student character formation. Rewards serve as external motivation that encourages students to try harder and actively participate in the learning process. With rewards, students feel rewarded for their efforts and achievements, increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem. This increase in self-confidence is significant in forming positive character because confident students are more likely to take the initiative, dare to

express opinions, and be more persistent in facing challenges. In addition, awards teach values such as fairness and respect for effort, where students learn that hard work and dedication will result in well-deserved recognition and rewards.

In addition to increasing motivation and self-confidence, giving rewards also has a positive impact on students' discipline and responsibility. By setting clear criteria for awards, students learn to set goals and work consistently to achieve them. It teaches them the importance of discipline and responsibility in achieving success. In addition, rewards can also encourage mutual respect among students. When students see their peers receive awards, they learn to appreciate the achievements of others and are motivated to achieve the same. This creates a positive and supportive learning environment where students encourage and support each other. Overall, rewards enrich students' learning experience and contribute significantly to positive character building, including self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, and reward for effort.

Applying peer teaching in Islamic learning at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro has significant implications for student character formation. Peer teaching involves a more proficient student to help his or her peers who may have difficulty understanding the subject matter. This method teaches many positive values that are important in forming student character. First, peer teaching develops communication and cooperation skills. Students who act as tutors must be able to explain concepts clearly and effectively, improving their communication ability. In addition, this process fosters cooperation, as peer tutors and assisted students work together to achieve a better understanding. The ability to communicate well and cooperate with others is an essential skill in their daily lives and future.

In addition, peer teaching also teaches the values of responsibility and empathy. Students who act as peer tutors are responsible for helping their peers learn, which develops their sense of responsibility and independence. They learn to be good leaders who are responsible for others' learning progress. Empathy is also an integral part of peer teaching because helpful students must understand and feel the difficulties faced by their peers. This increases their ability to empathize and care for others, which is essential in forming moral and social character. Through peer teaching, students learn that success is measured by personal achievement and the ability to help others succeed. Overall, peer teaching enriches academic learning and contributes significantly to students' character-building, including communication skills, cooperation, responsibility, and empathy.

## CONCLUSION

Improving critical thinking skills in Islamic lessons at MTs Muhammadiyah 5 Al Fajar Kapas Bojonegoro through using HOTS questions, reward giving, and peer tutor methods has shown significant results. HOTS questions encourage students to think more deeply and analytically, developing their ability to analyze, evaluate, and create solutions based on the information provided. This enhances their academic understanding and prepares them to face

future challenges in more critical and innovative ways. Rewarding is an external motivation that inspires students to try harder and be actively involved in learning, increasing their confidence, discipline, and responsibility. The peer tutor method, in which more proficient students help their peers who lack understanding of the material, teaches the values of cooperation, responsibility, and empathy and improves their communication skills.

The implications of this approach on student character building are very positive. HOTS questions help build essential critical thinking skills while rewarding students to achieve higher and rewarding their efforts. Peer tutors develop a sense of responsibility and empathetic skills and encourage cooperation and effective communication. Overall, combining these three methods enriches academic learning and shapes students' character for the better, making them critical, creative, responsible, and caring individuals for others. Thus, applying this method is expected to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has strong character and is ready to face various challenges in the future.

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