

Integration of Critical Reasoning in Islamic Religious Learning at State High School 1 Totikum

Jumahir^{1*}, Laode Fazril Tuha Liasi², Wahdayni Ishak³, Vivin Angriani Sadalia⁴, Rosmita Hapsun⁵

Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk

Corresponding Author: Jumahir; jumahirmagfira@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Critical Thinking, Problem-Based Learning, Constructivism

Received : 5 January

Revised : 23 February

Accepted: 23 March

©2026 Jumahir, Liasi, Ishak, Sadalia, Hapsun: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in secondary schools is required not only to be oriented towards mastering the material, but also towards developing students' critical thinking skills. However, in practice, PAI learning is still often dominated by rote learning and passive reception. This research aims to analyze the integration of critical reasoning in the planning and implementation of PAI learning at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum and identify supporting and inhibiting factors. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with one PAI teacher and four students, as well as observing the learning process in class. Data analysis was carried out through reduction stages, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using source triangulation techniques to maintain the validity of the data. The research results show that the integration of critical reasoning has been designed through the preparation of teaching modules and the use of active learning strategies such as discussions and Problem-Based Learning. However, its implementation is not yet fully optimal because it is influenced by time constraints, heterogeneity of student abilities, and a passive learning culture. This research concludes that strengthening critical reasoning in PAI learning requires synergy between pedagogical design, school structural support, and ongoing habituation to a dialogical culture

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, morality, and way of thinking in facing the dynamics of modern life. Amidst the development of information and the complexity of socio-religious issues, PAI learning is no longer solely oriented towards the transfer of normative knowledge and textual memorization. Students are required to understand, analyze, and reflect on Islamic teachings rationally, contextually, and applicably. Therefore, developing critical thinking skills is a crucial aspect of the PAI learning process in secondary schools (Hanapi, 2025).

Conceptually, critical thinking in an educational context refers to an individual's ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and make rational and responsible decisions (Kusuma, 2024). In PAI learning, critical thinking is not intended to destructively question religious teachings, but rather to explore wisdom, understand the context in which verses were revealed (*asbābun nuzūl*), and examine the relevance of Islamic values to the realities of contemporary life. This approach enables students to understand not only the "what" of religious teachings, but also the "why" and "how" of their application (Ritonga, 2024).

However, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning practices in various educational institutions still face challenges in optimally integrating critical reasoning. Based on preliminary findings at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process tends to be oriented toward mastery of material and contextual memorization. Students receive material presented by teachers without being fully encouraged to ask analytical questions such as what, why, how, and in what context the verses of the Quran were revealed and how they relate to the material being studied. This situation has the potential to limit the space for religious dialogue, analysis, and reflection, which should be an integral part of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

However, in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers indicate a systematic effort to integrate critical reasoning through various active learning strategies, such as group discussions, case studies, and problem-based learning approaches. Teachers also strive to link material to historical and social contexts and encourage students to compare the opinions of scholars on simple Islamic jurisprudence issues. These findings demonstrate a dynamic between progressive pedagogical planning and the reality of classroom implementation, which still faces challenges such as time constraints, heterogeneity in student abilities, and a passive learning culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This gap between learning design and student critical participation is the primary focus of this study. This research aims to analyze how the integration of critical reasoning into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum is planned and implemented, and to identify factors that support and hinder its development. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research is expected to provide an empirical overview of critical reasoning-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning practices and offer academic reflections for strengthening a more dialogical, reflective, and contextual PAI learning model.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain a deeper understanding of the integration of critical reasoning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on exploring the processes, meanings, and dynamics of learning interactions that cannot be measured quantitatively. The case study was used to obtain a comprehensive overview of PAI learning practices in a real-life context at a specific educational institution. The research was conducted during the current semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, with one PAI teacher and four students selected purposively based on their active involvement in the learning process.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews and learning observations. The interviews were semi-structured to provide space for exploring the experiences, strategies, and perspectives of teachers and students regarding the development of critical thinking skills in PAI learning. Observations were conducted to directly observe classroom interaction patterns, the types of questions asked by the teacher, student participation, and the dynamics of discussions that occurred during the learning process. The data obtained were then documented and transcribed to facilitate further analysis.

Data analysis was carried out in stages through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized data based on themes relevant to the research focus, such as learning planning, critical reasoning development strategies, student participation, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Next, the data were presented in narrative descriptive form to systematically illustrate the findings. To maintain data validity, this study employed source triangulation techniques by comparing teacher and student interviews and classroom observation findings, ensuring the validity of the findings could be academically justified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum have designed learning with the integration of critical thinking skills in mind. Planning begins with an analysis of Learning Outcomes (CP) and Learning Objectives (TP), which are then incorporated into teaching modules. In developing these modules, teachers not only set targets for mastery of the material but also design activities that encourage students to understand the wisdom, historical context (*asbābun nuzūl*), and the relevance of Islamic teachings to everyday life. This planning demonstrates a pedagogical awareness that goes beyond a rote approach. Teachers also adapt the learning design to student characteristics to make the learning process more adaptive and contextual.

These findings indicate that conceptually, the integration of critical thinking has become an integral part of the learning design. Teachers stated that each material strives to include analytical questions such as "why was this law established" and "how does it apply in the current context." Theoretically, this practice aligns with the principles of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based

learning, where students are guided to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on information, rather than simply memorize it. This concept aligns with Ennis's view, which positions critical thinking as a reflective and rational ability to determine what to believe or do. Thus, the learning design designed by teachers has led to the development of students' analytical and reflective abilities.

However, even though planning accommodates the development of critical thinking, its effectiveness is highly dependent on classroom dynamics and student readiness. This suggests that good planning does not necessarily guarantee optimal implementation in learning practices. From a constructivist perspective, as proposed by Vygotsky, effective learning occurs when there is active interaction and adequate social support within students' zones of proximal development. This means that critical learning design requires active student involvement for planned objectives to be realized. Without adequate participation, the integration of critical thinking has the potential to stop at the planning document level (Lestari, 2024).

Furthermore, substantively, the planning carried out by teachers demonstrates an effort to shift the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning paradigm from a normative-dogmatic approach to a reflective-contextual approach. This approach is relevant to the demands of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking competencies and meaningful learning. Research (Firmansyah, 2025) also shows that integrating open-ended questions and analyzing the historical context of verses can improve students' conceptual understanding in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. By incorporating the dimensions of *asbābun nuzūl* (the reasons for the revelation of the truth) and comparing the opinions of scholars, teachers have created an interpretive space that encourages broad religious insight. This is crucial for fostering a tolerant and argumentative attitude in understanding differing views within Islam.

However, structural challenges such as time constraints and the density of curriculum material remain factors that influence the quality of implementation of such planning. Research (Prayogi, 2025) in the field of religious education shows that a dense curriculum often leads teachers to focus more on completing material than on in-depth analysis. This situation has implications for students' limited opportunities to explore critical questions in depth. Therefore, strengthening the integration of critical reasoning requires not only thorough pedagogical planning but also policy support and more flexible learning time management. Therefore, the effectiveness of critical reasoning-based planning will be largely determined by the synergy between curriculum design, implementation strategies, and classroom learning culture (Utami, 2025).

In practice, teachers employ several active learning strategies, such as group discussions, case studies, and Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Learning takes place not only through lectures but also involves two-way interaction through open-ended questions and exploration of real-life cases. For example, in discussions on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), students are invited to compare the opinions of several scholars and discuss the argumentative reasons behind these differences. Teachers also provide space for students to express their opinions

independently before providing clarification or reinforcement of concepts. This strategy demonstrates a systematic effort to encourage students' intellectual engagement in the learning process.

Student interviews indicate that some students are becoming accustomed to analytical questions, especially when teachers ask them to explain the rationale for a law or relate the material to social phenomena around them. Several students acknowledged that the discussion method helped them understand the material better than simply listening to the teacher's explanation. Students felt more challenged when asked to provide reasons and concrete examples from everyday life. However, not all students responded equally to this approach. Some students still needed additional encouragement and guidance to confidently express their ideas.

Analytically, this practice reflects an effort to build a dialogical culture in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. From a constructivist perspective, learning that provides space for interaction and exploration allows students to actively construct understanding through the process of negotiating meaning. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction in forming higher-order cognitive structures through the zone of proximal development (Fitriani & Maemonah, 2022). Therefore, group discussions and case studies implemented by teachers have the potential to expand students' thinking capacity through collaboration and the exchange of ideas. This approach is relevant to 21st-century learning, which demands critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills.

The use of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning also aligns with the critical thinking theory proposed by Peter Facione, which emphasizes interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference skills (Hidayati, 2024). In PBL, students are confronted with contextual problems that require them to find solutions based on Islamic values. This process not only trains the ability to understand texts but also assesses their relevance and implications in real-life situations. Previous research has shown that PBL is effective in improving higher-order thinking skills because students are directly involved in solving authentic problems. Thus, the implementation of this strategy shows a pedagogical awareness to integrate analytical dimensions in religious learning (Jasmaludin, 2025).

However, research findings also indicate that not all students are able to participate equally in discussions and problem-solving. Some still tend to be passive and wait for direct direction from the teacher, indicating that transforming the learning culture requires a gradual process. This condition can be understood as the impact of previous learning habits that were more oriented towards receiving information in a one-way manner. Research (Sihombing & Gultom, 2025) in the context of religious education shows that the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning requires time and consistent adaptation. Therefore, the implementation of critical thinking development strategies needs to be accompanied by strengthening motivation, gradual guidance, and the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment.

Observations indicate that the classroom atmosphere is relatively conducive, and teachers strive to create psychological safety so that students feel confident in expressing their opinions. Teachers appreciate all participation, both correct answers and those that need clarification. This aims to build students' confidence in discussions. Teachers also avoid judgmental responses to reduce students' fear of making mistakes. These efforts demonstrate an awareness of the importance of a supportive learning environment in encouraging active student engagement.

Psychological safety in learning plays a crucial role in the development of critical thinking skills. Humanistic learning theory emphasizes that students will be more effective in expressing ideas when they feel valued and accepted. In this context, an appreciative teacher's attitude is a supporting factor in fostering students' intellectual courage (Iqbal Chailan, 2024). Previous research has shown that an inclusive and dialogical classroom environment is positively correlated with increased student participation in academic discussions. Thus, a conducive classroom dynamic is an important foundation for the development of critical thinking.

However, active participation is still dominated by certain students with better academic abilities. Students with lower initial abilities tend to lack confidence in expressing their opinions. This situation indicates a gap in the development of critical thinking among students. This phenomenon can be understood through the perspective of learning ability differentiation, which shows that each student has different cognitive and affective readiness. This inequality in participation poses a challenge to realizing truly participatory and equitable learning.

In this context, the development of critical thinking is not only related to learning strategies but also to the psychological and social factors of students. A learning culture that was previously oriented towards passive acceptance also influences students' readiness to actively engage. The theory of habituation in education explains that long-established learning patterns take time to change through consistent practice. Therefore, integrating critical reasoning requires a sustainable approach that focuses not only on methods but also on the development of a reflective academic culture. This transformation cannot occur instantly, but rather through a gradual process of adaptation.

Furthermore, the dynamics of classroom interactions are also influenced by social relations between students. In group discussions, more dominant students tend to take over the conversation, while others prefer to be passive listeners. This situation highlights the importance of more structured group management so that each student has an equal opportunity to participate. Previous research in collaborative education has shown that assigning roles within groups can increase equitable participation. Therefore, strengthening critical thinking in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes requires a more systematic interaction management strategy to ensure optimal development for all students.

This research identified several supporting factors for integrating critical thinking into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Teacher commitment

to using participatory methods is a key factor encouraging the creation of a dialogic space in the classroom. A relatively open classroom atmosphere and the use of open-ended questions that stimulate analysis also strengthen the process of developing critical thinking. Curriculum support that emphasizes competency-based learning also provides a structural foundation that enables the implementation of an analytical approach. These factors demonstrate the alignment between curriculum policies and teachers' pedagogical awareness in developing higher-order thinking skills.

Theoretically, teacher commitment plays a central role in the success of critical thinking-based learning. The theory of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) emphasizes that learning success is largely determined by the teacher's ability to integrate content, strategies, and student characteristics. In this context, teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, creating spaces for reflection and argumentation (Hafizi, 2024). Research (Hikma Apriyani, 2024) shows that teachers with a constructivist orientation tend to be more successful in developing students' critical thinking skills. Thus, internal teacher factors are an important foundation in the transformation process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

On the other hand, several inhibiting factors affect the optimal integration of critical reasoning. Limited learning time often limits the space for comprehensive exploration and in-depth analysis of material. The density of curriculum material also pushes teachers to achieve completion targets, so in-depth critical discussions are not always possible. Furthermore, heterogeneity in student abilities creates differences in levels of readiness for analysis-based learning. This situation demonstrates that structural and pedagogical factors are intertwined in influencing the quality of implementation.

The persistent passive learning culture among some students also poses a significant challenge. From Bourdieu's habitus theory perspective, learning patterns formed through previous educational experiences tend to shape certain dispositions toward the learning process. If students are accustomed to a teacher-centered model, adapting to a dialogic approach requires time and practice. Research in religious education shows that changing learning culture cannot be achieved solely through method innovation, but also through establishing a consistent academic climate. Therefore, strengthening critical thinking requires a long-term strategy that addresses students' cultural and psychological dimensions.

Overall, the research results indicate that the integration of critical thinking into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum has been systematically pursued during the planning and implementation stages. However, its effectiveness has not been fully optimized due to the influence of interacting structural and cultural factors. This indicates that developing critical thinking requires not only sound pedagogical design but also broader systemic support. The synergy between time management, curriculum flexibility, and fostering a dialogic culture is key to optimizing this process. Therefore, the success of integrating critical thinking into Islamic

Religious Education (PAI) learning depends on a balance between method innovation, student readiness, and educational policy support.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings, the integration of critical reasoning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMA Negeri 1 Totikum has been systematically designed and implemented by teachers through analysis of Learning Outcomes and Objectives, development of teaching modules, and the use of active learning strategies such as discussions, case studies, and Problem-Based Learning. These efforts demonstrate a pedagogical awareness to shift PAI learning from a normative rote approach to a reflective and contextual approach. In practice, teachers have strived to create a dialogic and psychologically safe classroom environment, encouraging students to express their opinions and develop arguments based on Islamic values. However, the effectiveness of critical reasoning integration has not been fully optimized due to time constraints, curriculum density, heterogeneity of student abilities, and the persistent passive learning culture among some students. Therefore, developing critical reasoning in PAI learning requires a sustainable and systematic approach to ensure a gradual transformation of the learning culture.

In line with these findings, strengthening aspects of learning management, particularly time management and differentiation strategies, is needed to ensure all students have equal opportunities for active participation. Teachers are advised to continue developing a variety of participatory methods and expanding the use of reflective questions that challenge in-depth analysis. Furthermore, fostering a dialogical culture needs to be consistently implemented through the provision of structured discussion spaces and the assignment of roles in group work so that participation is not dominated by certain students. School support in the form of academic policies that provide flexibility in the in-depth study of material is also a crucial factor in strengthening the integration of critical thinking. With collaborative efforts between teachers, students, and educational institutions, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has the potential to become more meaningful and relevant to the needs of students in the contemporary era.

This research has theoretical and practical implications for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at the secondary school level. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the view that the integration of critical reasoning in religious learning does not conflict with normative values but rather deepens understanding and internalization of Islamic teachings contextually. The integration of constructivist and problem-based learning approaches in PAI demonstrates that the development of higher-order thinking skills can go hand in hand with the formation of religious character. This contributes to the development of a more dialogical, reflective, and responsive PAI learning model to the challenges of the times.

Practically, this research provides an empirical illustration that the success of developing critical thinking is determined not only by learning design but also by cultural and structural factors within the school environment. Therefore, the implementation of critical reasoning-based learning needs to be accompanied by

strengthening teachers' pedagogical competencies, fostering an open academic culture, and supporting adaptive school policies. This research also opens up opportunities for further studies that could explore the effectiveness of specific models in greater depth through quantitative or mixed methods approaches. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for developing more comprehensive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovations oriented toward developing a generation that is both religious and critical.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Integration of Critical Reasoning in Islamic Religious Learning at State High School 1 Totikum in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

REFERENCES

- Firmansyah, Miftahul Husni, Ade Rosad, Muhammad Iqbal Al Ghozali, & Muhamad Basyrul Muvid. (2025). Efektivitas Inquiry Learning dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Konseptual dan Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis Siswa pada Pembelajaran PAI. *Action Research Journal Indonesia (ARJI)*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.61227/arji.v7i1.301>
- Fitriani, F., & Maemonah, M. (2022). PERKEMBANGAN TEORI VYGOTSKY DAN IMPLIKASI DALAM PEMBELAJARAN MATEMATIKA DI MIS RAJADESA CIAMIS. *Primary: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, 11(1), 35. <https://doi.org/10.33578/jpfkip.v11i1.8398>
- Hafizi, T. F., Sufyadi, S., & Qomario, Q. (2024). Pemanfaatan Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) dalam Pembelajaran Informatika Kelas X SMA GIBS. *JiIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(8), 9218-9222. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i8.5327>
- Hanapi, J., Amaluddin, A., Jusrianti, J., Sutriana, S., & Hasnita, H. (2025). Pengembangan Keterampilan Sosial Siswa melalui Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Menengah. *Sulawesi Tenggara Educational Journal*, 5(1), 376-384. <https://doi.org/10.54297/seduj.v5i1.1121>
- Hidayati, I. N., Berliana, C. I., & Zaman, B. (2024). Penerapan Metode Problem Based Learning dalam Meningkatkan Berfikir Kritis Pada Pembelajaran PAI. *Journal of Instructional and Development Researches*, 4(6), 540-550. <https://doi.org/10.53621/jider.v4i6.418>
- Hikma Apriyani, Agus Pahrudin, Agus Jatmiko, & Koderi. (2024). Implications of Constructivism Theory for the Development of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum. *al-Iltizam: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*,

9(2), 209–219. <https://doi.org/10.33477/alt.v9i2.7942>

- Iqbal Chailani, M., Fahrub, A. W., Fitri Rohmatilah, L. L., & Kurniawan, A. (2024). Teori Belajar Humanistik dan Implikasinya dalam Pembelajaran PAI. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 33(2), 583–594. <https://doi.org/10.32585/jp.v33i2.5287>
- Jasmaludin, J., Ali, N., & Hayati, H. (2025). STRATEGI PEMBELAJARAN PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM BERBASIS PROBLEM BASED LEARNING (PBL). *Jurnal Tunas Bangsa*, 12(2), 118–131. <https://doi.org/10.46244/tunasbangsa.v12i2.3495>
- Kusuma, E., Handayani, A., & Rakhmawati, D. (2024). PENTINGNYA PENGEMBANGAN KEMAMPUAN BERPIKIR KRITIS PADA SISWA SEKOLAH DASAR: SEBUAH TINJAUAN LITERATUR. *Wawasan Pendidikan*, 4(2), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.26877/jwp.v4i2.17971>
- Lestari, A. I., Ndona, Y., & Gultom, I. (2024). Pengembangan Sosial Emosional Siswa SD dengan Perspektif Konstruktivisme Sosial Oleh Lev Vygotsky. *JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(11), 12441–12445. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i11.6193>
- Prayogi, R. (2025). ANALISIS KEMAMPUAN GURU PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM TERHADAP IMPLEMENTASI KURIKULUM MERDEKA. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 8(1), 1656–1661. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v8i1.40634>
- Ritonga, S., Usela, S., Asyikin, N., Trisesa, R., & Ulan, S. (2024). Strategi Guru dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam: Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis pada Generasi Z. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Development Research*, 3(1), 708–715. <https://doi.org/10.57235/ijedr.v3i1.4870>
- Sihombing, S. A., & Gultom, R. S. (2025). IMPLEMENTASI STRATEGI INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING PADA PENDIDIKAN AGAMA KRISTEN DAN DAMPAKNYA TERHADAP PEMIKIRAN KRITIS SISWA. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 8(4), 8242–8247. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v8i4.53042>
- Utami, D. R., Pahrudin, A., & Rahmi, S. (2025). Strategi Manajemen Pengembangan Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran Terpadu untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan di Era Globalisasi. *Action Research Journal Indonesia (ARJI)*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.61227/arji.v7i2.385>