

## ANALYSIS OF LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION TO ENHANCE STUDENTS COGNITIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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**Abstrak:** Studi sejarah budaya Islam sering dipahami sebagai mata pelajaran yang hanya mengajarkan siswa untuk mengetahui dan memahami peristiwa atau informasi dari masa lalu. Namun, sifat mata pelajaran ini menuntut relevansi dengan konteks kehidupan siswa saat ini. Sebagai tanggapan, MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung dan MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal berusaha mengatasi masalah ini dengan mengembangkan pendekatan pembelajaran yang melampaui keterampilan kognitif untuk fokus pada pemikiran kritis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis upaya yang dilakukan oleh kedua madrasah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Upaya untuk meningkatkan kemampuan kognitif dan keterampilan berpikir kritis dimulai dari tahap perencanaan pembelajaran, seperti pengembangan rencana pelajaran dan bahan ajar yang memberikan kesempatan bagi siswa untuk terlibat dalam berpikir kritis. Pelaksanaan pembelajaran menggunakan berbagai strategi dan media interaktif, seperti diskusi, presentasi, dan alat bantu visual. Penilaian dilakukan secara formatif dan sumatif, mencakup aspek kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik, dan digunakan sebagai dasar untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran. Secara umum, strategi yang diterapkan mampu mendorong partisipasi aktif siswa dan meningkatkan pemahaman mereka tentang sejarah Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam, Kognitif, Berpikir Kritis

**Abstract:** The study of History of Islamic Civilization is often understood as a subject that only teaches students to know and understand events or information from the past. However, the nature of this subject requires relevance to the context of students' lives today. In response to this, MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal have sought to address this issue by developing a learning approach that goes beyond cognitive skills to focus on critical thinking. This study aims to analyze the efforts made by both madrasahs. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Efforts to enhance cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills begin with the planning phase of instruction, such as developing lesson plans and instructional materials that provide opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking. Instructional implementation employs various strategies and interactive media, such as discussions, presentations, and visual aids. Assessment is carried out formatively and summatively, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and is used as a basis for improving learning. In general, the strategies applied are able to encourage active student participation and improve their understanding of Islamic history.

**Keywords:** History of Islamic Civilization, Cognitive, Critical Thinking

## INTRUDUCTION

Education plays a very important role in shaping quality human resources. One of the main goals of education is to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also virtuous (Fachrudin, 2023). According to Article 1 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is a conscious effort to prepare students through guidance, teaching, and or training activities for their future roles. This statement indicates that education must prepare individuals to be able to play an active role in society by mastering various knowledge and skills needed for the future. In that framework, education must be able to develop the ability of students as a whole, both cognitively, affective, and psychomotor (Darmalinda & Fadriati, 2024).

National development in the field of education is also one of the benchmarks of a nation's progress. In Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, it is stated that National Development in the field of education is an effort to educate the nation's life and improve the quality of Indonesian human beings who have faith, piety, noble character and master science and technology (Purwanto, 2022; Qodir, 2014). One of the main benchmarks of educational success that needs to be considered is the cognitive ability of students, which can be seen from their learning outcomes in understanding various concepts and critical thinking skills (Darmalinda & Fadriati, 2024; Nurpriatna et al., 2021).

Cognitive ability is a person's ability to process information, think logically, and understand and solve problems faced. This is

very important to support intellectual intelligence which is the basis for success in various aspects of life. This cognitive ability cannot be formed only by providing information in one direction, but requires an active, interactive and fun learning process. According to Ryadi (2023), an effective learning process must involve the mental involvement of students in understanding and internalizing the material, so that they not only memorize information, but can also process and apply it in a broader context (Akhyar et al., 2024; Kartika & Arifudin, 2022).

In line with this, the ability to think critically becomes an integral part in the development of students' cognitive abilities. Critical thinking skills are the ability to analyze, evaluate, and solve problems in a rational and objective manner. This is very important in honing reasoning power and making the right decisions. Research by Aryani et al.,(2024) emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in creating a learning atmosphere that supports the development of critical thinking and cognitive abilities of students, especially through the application of effective learning strategies and in accordance with the characteristics of students.

Learning strategies are steps arranged by educators to achieve predetermined learning objectives. Idris (2015) explains that a learning strategy is a series of activities that include structured and directed planning, implementation, and evaluation, with the aim of producing maximum learning results. The learning strategy used must pay attention to various factors, such as

learning objectives, learner characteristics, learning materials, and the existing social and cultural context. In this case, the learning strategy applied in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, especially in the subject of History of Islamic Civilization, must be able to hone the cognitive abilities and critical thinking of students, as well as integrate the character values contained in the subject (Aini & Rosyid, 2022; Liwaul et al., 2022).

However, the reality in the field shows that many teachers still have difficulties in designing and implementing effective learning strategies to develop students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. Many studies show that there is still a gap between the strategies applied and the needs of students in the learning process. This is also reflected in the learning results of History of Islamic Civilization subjects in Madrasah Tsanawiyah which tend to show the low ability of students in understanding historical concepts and difficulties in applying the knowledge gained in everyday life.

One of the main causes of this problem is the incompatibility of the learning strategies used with the characteristics of the subject of History of Islamic Civilization, which in addition to requiring a conceptual understanding of history, also requires mastery of Islamic and cultural values contained therein. History of Islamic Civilization is a subject that not only teaches historical facts, but also teaches students to understand the important role of history in the formation of national character and morality. Therefore, learning the history of Islamic culture requires an approach that not

only focuses on mastering the material, but also on developing students' critical thinking skills in seeing the relevance of history to contemporary life (Nugroho, 2021; Pratama & Ramadhan, 2022).

Various previous studies have highlighted the importance of learning strategies in improving learning outcomes, including students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. Research by Rico (2022) shows that the application of effective learning strategies can improve students' ability to understand subject matter and develop critical thinking skills. Nurpriatna et al. (2021) also emphasized that learning strategies based on active and participatory methods can improve students' learning abilities, especially in terms of problem solving and creativity. In addition, Aini and Rosyid's research (2022) on analyzing students' critical thinking shows the importance of developing cognitive styles in the context of learning. Meanwhile, Ilya (2022) examines students' critical thinking in learning History of Islamic Civilization, but is still limited to studies conducted in certain areas. Laili et al., (2022) also focuses on learning History of Islamic Civilization in Madrasah Diniyah, but has not connected in depth the learning strategy with the improvement of critical thinking and cognitive skills of students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

The distinction of this research lies in its focus which examines in depth the application of learning strategies in History of Islamic Civilization subjects at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. This research not only looks at the effectiveness of

learning strategies on improving cognitive and critical thinking skills, but also explores how the context and characteristics of students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah affect the strategies applied. In addition, this research will make a new contribution in identifying the relationship between planning, implementation, and assessment of History of Islamic Civilization learning with the improvement of students' critical thinking skills, something that has not been widely studied in previous research. With this focus, this research has the potential to provide new insights for the development of more effective learning practices in madrasah.

As part of the effort to overcome these problems, this research focuses on analyzing the learning strategies applied in two madrasahs in Bulok District, Tanggamus Regency, namely MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal. This study aims to explore more deeply how the History of Islamic Civilization learning strategy can improve the cognitive abilities and critical thinking of students. Through this study, it is hoped that useful findings can be found in developing learning practices that are more innovative, effective, and in accordance with the needs of students in the context of Islamic education, especially in the subject of History of Islamic Civilization.

With a more contextual and measurable approach, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of better learning practices in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, as well as enriching the repertoire of knowledge regarding the application of learning strategies that can improve cognitive abilities and critical

thinking of students. In addition, this research is also expected to provide useful recommendations for educators, madrasah managers, and other related parties in designing and implementing more effective learning strategies in the future.

Overall, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between learning strategies and the improvement of students' cognitive abilities and critical thinking in the subject of History of Islamic Civilization in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. In this context, this research will be an important reference for further studies related to learning strategies in Islamic education, especially at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design that aims to analyze History of Islamic Civilization learning strategies in honing students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomena that occur in the field, especially in the context of learning that takes place in the classroom. This research is also oriented to describe events in detail through narrative descriptions, which allows researchers to obtain a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the learning process carried out by teachers and student responses. Through this approach, it is expected to produce a deeper understanding of the application of learning strategies in developing students' cognitive and critical thinking skills, which is not only

based on statistical data but also direct observation of the behavior and interactions that occur in the classroom (Creswell, 2007).

The case study approach applied in this research refers to the guidelines proposed by Robert K. Yin (2003), which emphasizes the importance of in-depth data collection from several relevant sources, as well as how to analyze data systematically. This case study aims to explore a specific phenomenon and concentrate on one or more units of analysis to understand the strategies applied in a broader context. The research location was chosen at two Madrasah Tsanawiyah, namely MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal which are located in Bulok District, Tanggamus Regency. The selection of this location was based on considerations of suitability with the focus of the research, where both madrasahs have relevant characteristics and provide the information needed to explore learning practices applied in the subject of History of Islamic Civilization. In addition, they also represent the diversity of conditions that exist in the region, so that they can provide a broader picture of the learning strategies used by teachers in improving students' cognitive and critical thinking skills.

In this research, data sources are divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from History of Islamic Civilization teachers who teach in both madrasahs, through in-depth interviews and direct observation. Teachers are the main subjects because of their crucial role in implementing learning strategies that can

hone students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. Secondary data were obtained from documents and archives available in the madrasahs, such as syllabi, lesson plans, as well as administrative records that include information about students and teachers' educational backgrounds. These documents provide additional context that can support the analysis of the strategies applied in learning.

The data collection techniques used in this research include in-depth interviews, direct observation in the field, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore the views, experiences, and practices applied by teachers in the learning process of History of Islamic Civilization. Field observations were conducted by directly monitoring the learning process in the classroom, to see how teachers implement the planned strategies and how students respond to the learning. Document analysis aims to identify learning materials, strategies used, and other supporting information that can enrich research data.

Data analysis techniques were carried out by following the three main stages proposed by Yin (2003), namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, data collected from interviews, observations, and documents will be filtered and organized to focus on issues that are relevant to the research objectives. At the data presentation stage, the organized data will be presented in narrative form to facilitate understanding of the dynamics that occur in the learning process. At the conclusion stage, researchers will analyze the data that has been presented

to draw conclusions that can explain the phenomenon under study, namely how the History of Islamic Civilization learning strategy can improve students' cognitive abilities and critical thinking.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this research uses source triangulation and technique triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from various sources, such as interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis. Technique triangulation is done by using several data collection methods, so as to ensure that the data collected complement each other and provide a more accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, this research is expected to provide a valid and objective picture of effective learning strategies in honing students' cognitive and critical thinking skills in History of Islamic Civilization subjects.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to analyze the learning strategy of History of Islamic Civilization in honing the cognitive abilities and critical thinking of students, which was conducted in two Madrasah Tsanawiyah, namely MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal. Based on the research results obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, the main findings can be divided into three major aspects, namely learning planning, learning implementation, and learning assessment, each of which contributes significantly in supporting students' cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills.

The following is a further discussion of the three aspects:

### **History of Islamic Civilization Lesson Planning**

Learning planning is a very important first step to determine clear learning objectives and support the achievement of student competencies. Careful planning allows teachers to design activities that lead to the development of students' cognitive abilities, especially in honing critical thinking skills. As a foundation, Abdul Majid (2018) explains that lesson planning is not only compiling activities, but also includes identifying learning objectives, selecting methods, and determining policies that are applicable and relevant to the student context.

The results showed that lesson planning at MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal was carried out very systematically. At MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung, teachers prepare lesson plans based on the 2013 Curriculum with a focus on developing students' critical and analytical thinking skills. Learning objectives are formulated in accordance with the Basic Competencies which are then adjusted to Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive domain. This shows that lesson planning in this madrasah emphasizes the importance of developing students' critical thinking skills from the start.

Meanwhile, at MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal, planning is carried out collaboratively between teachers and madrasah principals, with assistance from the curriculum team. The focus of planning here is on the

formulation of learning objectives that can develop students' ability to analyze the values of Islamic history. The lesson plans prepared pay attention to the needs of students and integrate Islamic character values, which are important in learning History of Islamic Civilization. The involvement of the madrasah head in ensuring the suitability of planning with learning objectives shows a strong commitment to students' cognitive development through a more contextual and value-based approach.

In both madrasas, lesson planning is not only oriented towards achieving cognitive goals, but also towards character values that support the formation of students who think critically. This finding supports Purwanto's opinion (Purwanto, 2022) which states that lesson planning that involves collaboration between teachers and school management can have a positive impact on learning quality.

### **Implementation of History of Islamic Civilization Learning**

Learning implementation is the core of the teaching-learning process that allows the achievement of planned learning objectives. Majid (Syafuruddin, 2017) explains that learning implementation is an activity that takes place interactively between teachers and students, with the aim of achieving optimal learning outcomes. In this context, success in the implementation of SKI learning is highly dependent on the application of effective strategies to hone students' cognitive and critical thinking skills.

At MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung, the implementation of learning is carried out with a narrative and dialogical approach, which involves visual media such as pictures, historical maps, and PowerPoint to improve students' understanding of historical material. Learning is participatory, where students are given the opportunity to discuss and express their opinions. This interaction is expected to stimulate students' critical thinking skills, especially in analyzing historical events from various perspectives. The madrasah principal is also actively involved in conducting supervision to ensure the effectiveness of learning implementation in the classroom.

Meanwhile, MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal applies an interactive approach through group discussions, questions and answers, and educational games. Learning is carried out with the use of learning media involving simple technology, such as documentary videos and historical infographics, which are appropriate for the cognitive level of students. Teachers also utilize simulations of historical events to help students understand the concepts taught more realistically. The success in the implementation of learning in these madrasas can be seen from its positive influence on the development of students' critical thinking skills, as found in the research of Badrudin et al. (2023) which states that the integration between people and educational facilities plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of learning.

Both madrasahs have demonstrated the practice of implementing learning that is not only based on theory, but also integrates

various methods that allow students to actively participate and think critically. This reinforces the importance of an approach that involves students in an active learning process to achieve higher cognitive goals.

### **History of Islamic Civilization Learning Assessment**

Learning assessment is an important step in evaluating the extent to which learning objectives are achieved, as well as providing useful feedback for the improvement of the next learning process. Tyler (2018) emphasizes that assessment is not only to measure student achievement, but also to provide information needed for improvement decisions in learning. In this study, learning assessment in both madrasahs showed an application that strongly supported the development of students' cognitive and critical thinking skills.

At MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung, the preparation of assessment instruments is carried out with reference to the learning objectives that have been prepared previously. The assessment instruments include multiple choice questions, descriptions, and projects that allow to evaluate students' conceptual understanding as well as their ability to think critically. Assessment is conducted periodically, either through written tests, quizzes or presentations, which serves to monitor students' progress on an ongoing basis. Assessment results are used to determine the level of student understanding and provide feedback for further learning improvement.

At MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal, assessment is carried out formatively and

summatively. Assessment instruments are prepared with the aim of assessing students' conceptual understanding as well as their critical thinking skills in linking Islamic historical values with real-life contexts. Assessment is conducted through exams, group assignments, and reflection on the material, which provides a comprehensive picture of students' ability to master the subject matter and think critically. The assessment results here are also used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of learning and taking corrective measures in the teaching process.

The overall findings suggest that assessment plays an important role in supporting adaptive and reflective learning processes. Planned and continuous assessment can help teachers to adapt teaching strategies to students' needs and strengthen the development of their critical thinking skills. This is in line with the opinion of Firmansyah et al. (2022) which shows that assessment results used systematically can increase student understanding and improve learning quality.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the planning, implementation, and assessment of History of Islamic Civilization learning at MTs Al-Ma'arif Suka Agung and MTs Mathla'ul Anwar Napal have gone well and support the development of students' cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills. Careful planning, interactive implementation, and continuous assessment are the keys to success in improving the quality of learning. This approach is in line



with educational theories that emphasize the importance of integration between cognitive aspects, character values, and critical thinking skills in the learning process. The success of these two madrasahs shows that collaborative learning planning, active implementation, and reflective assessment can produce effective and deep learning, especially in subjects that require deep conceptual understanding such as History of Islamic Civilization.

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