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Critical Thinking in Islamic Educational Tradition and Its Relevance to 21st Century Skills

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A B S T R A C T

Islamic education has a long-standing tradition of integrating intellectual and moral development, rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, to form balanced individuals. In the modern era, the need to align these traditions with the demands of 21st-century education becomes increasingly urgent. This study aims to analyze the development of critical thinking in Islamic educational traditions and its relevance to 21st-century skills. The research method used is a qualitative narrative approach through library research, examining written sources such as books, journals, and articles to understand concepts and phenomena in depth. The results of the study indicate that since its inception, Islamic education has emphasized the use of reason and reasoning in the learning process through the practices of ijtihad, deliberation, and scientific tolerance. This tradition forms the foundation of critical thinking relevant to modern learning. The integration of Islamic values with 21st-century skills, particularly the 4C skills (critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration), has the potential to improve the quality of Islamic education and prepare students to face global challenges intelligently, adaptively, and with character. This research provides a conceptual contribution to the development of curricula and learning strategies that combine Islamic knowledge with the demands of 21st-century skills.

1. Introduction

Islamic education has a long history of shaping the character and civilization of Muslims. In the context of Islamic education, education is a crucial aspect of Islamic society (Nurdin & Zubairi, 2023). The reform of Islamic education is inseparable from the role of important figures, one of whom is Jamaluddin Al-Afgani, an Islamic reformer who made significant contributions to developing education that was relevant to his time. His educational focus emphasized the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and scientific and technological disciplines, which he considered crucial to addressing the decline of the Islamic world due to stagnation in science, economics, and the military (Eka Adha Apriliani, 2020).

Since its inception, Islamic education has emphasized not only spiritual aspects but also provided ample room for the development of reason and critical thinking skills. However, in facing the complex challenges of the modern era, questions arise as to the extent to which Islamic educational traditions are capable of maintaining and developing critical thinking skills among students (Arif Musthofa & Ali, 2021). Islamic educational traditions have also been explained in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 151 :

كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْكُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيْكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

Meaning: "Just as (We have perfected our favors upon you), We also sent to you a Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) from (among) you who recited to you Our verses, purified you, and taught you the Book (Al-Qur'an) and wisdom (sunnah), and taught you what you did not know" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 151).

The critical paradigm in Islamic education is an approach that integrates all aspects of religious life, including the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and moral. Ideally, Islamic education should combine the physical and spiritual, the exoteric and the esoteric, the spiritual and the intellectual, and normative values and historical reality (Juliyantika & Batubara, 2022). In this critical thinking paradigm, the relationship between educators and students is built in an egalitarian manner, where both are free to argue without domination, by making values and ethics the link in the learning process (Shabriya, 2024). The integration of all these aspects will be the core for the balance of cognitive (reason), affective (faith), and psychomotor (deeds) aspects in Islamic education in practice (Putri, A. N & Sovia, 2020:158).

Critical thinking is also explained in QS. An-Nahl [16]: 44:

بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِۗ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ

Meaning: "...And We have sent down to you the Adz-Dhikr (Al-Qur'an), that you may explain to mankind what has been sent down to them, and that they may reflect (QS. An-Nahl: 44)."

Facing the dynamics of the modern era, Islamic education faces various challenges that demand critical and innovative thinking to remain relevant. Social change, technological advances, and the demands of global education make critical thinking an unavoidable necessity. Although Islamic education has a rich scientific and philosophical heritage, criticism of the traditional system, which tends to be static and less adaptable to modern developments, is increasingly emerging (Hidayati et al., 2025). The 21st century is marked by globalization, digitalization, and rapid technological development. These conditions not only influence the economy, politics, and culture but also significantly impact the world of education. Globalization demands that students possess global competencies, such as cross-cultural understanding, the ability to communicate in multiple languages, and critical thinking skills to face complex global challenges. Therefore, education no longer aims solely to build local capacity but also prepares students to compete globally (Jochebed, 2019).

It is in this context that 21st-century skills become highly relevant. Technological developments and globalization have transformed the demands of the workplace, requiring individuals to think critically, innovate, collaborate, and solve problems creatively and reflectively. These skills are known as the 4Cs: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Creativity and Innovation. Islamic education, if it is to remain relevant, must integrate these values into its learning process (Jannah et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to reexamine the history and relevance of critical thinking in the Islamic educational tradition, as well as its relationship to 21st-century skills. By understanding the historical roots and values underlying critical thinking practices in Islam, we can develop educational approaches that are appropriate to the demands of the times. The integration of Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches is expected to produce students who are not only spiritually devout but also possess critical, collaborative, communicative, and creative thinking skills, which are part of the core competencies of the 21st century (Hamidah et al., 2023).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the development and application of critical thinking in the Islamic educational tradition and to examine the extent to which these values are relevant and can be integrated with 21st-century skills. This study is expected to provide a scientific contribution to the historical and philosophical understanding of Islamic education, which emphasizes rational and reflective thinking, and to offer new perspectives on developing curricula and learning strategies responsive to global challenges. Thus, this research seeks to enrich the discourse on contemporary Islamic education and encourage the implementation of critical thinking skills as an integral part of 21st-century learning.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach to analyze the development of the concept of critical thinking in the Islamic educational tradition and its relevance to 21st-century skills. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore in-depth the philosophical and historical understanding of the concept of critical thinking as it has developed within the Islamic educational system over time (Sugiyono, 2021). The main focus of this research is to explore the meaning, values, and principles of critical thinking reflected in the thoughts of classical and contemporary Muslim figures, and to see how these principles can be contextualized within the demands of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

In data collection, researchers relied on a variety of relevant literature sources, ranging from classical works such as the thoughts of Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Al-Farabi, to contemporary works discussing Islamic education and 21st-century skills. The data reviewed came from books, scientific journals, academic articles, research reports, and other related documents. The source selection criteria were based on the relevance of the content, the author's authority, and their contribution to the understanding of the concept of critical thinking in Islamic education. This literature review aims not only to gather information but also to trace the historical

traces, shifts in meaning, and contextual influences on the development of the concept of critical thinking in Islamic education (Rukminingsih, 2020).

The data analysis process was carried out systematically through several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data collection stage included identifying and selecting relevant literature. Data reduction was carried out by sorting important information that aligns with the research focus, then presenting it thematically to facilitate understanding of the main concepts. Conclusions were drawn through in-depth interpretation of the analyzed data, with the aim of identifying the relationship between the tradition of critical thinking in Islamic education and its application within the framework of 21st-century skills. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and a critical review of the literature used (Subaidi et al., 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

Discussions about critical thinking in the Islamic educational tradition cannot be separated from Islam's perspective on reason and the function of human intellect. From the beginning, Islam has placed a significant emphasis on the importance of thinking as a means of understanding revelation, the universe, and the realities of life. This is reflected in numerous verses of the Quran that encourage humanity to use their reason, such as the expressions afala ta'qilun (will you not think?), yatafakkarun (those who reflect), and ulul albab (those who understand). These verses serve as the initial foundation that critical thinking is not a foreign concept in Islam, but rather an integral part of the scientific tradition deeply rooted since the time of the Prophet (Arsyad, 2023).

As Islamic civilization developed, this tradition of critical thinking grew through educational institutions such as mosques, madrasas, and classical Islamic universities, which taught not only text memorization but also discussion, debate, and problem-solving. Great figures in Islamic history such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd are vivid examples of how rationality and faith can coexist within the framework of Islamic scholarship (Redhana, 2019). Through logical, philosophical, and ijtihad approaches, they demonstrate that Islam is not only a religion that encourages submission but also teaches responsible freedom of thought. This discussion will delve deeper into how these values developed and how the concept of critical thinking in Islam is strongly relevant to 21st-century skills.

A. Early Traditions and Classical Development of Critical Thinking in Islam

The tradition of critical thinking in Islam has deep historical roots dating back to the earliest days of revelation. The Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, explicitly calls on humanity to use reason to understand divine guidance and natural phenomena (Firdausi et al., 2021). Terms such as afala ta'qilun (do you not think?), yatafakkarun (thinking people), ya'qilun (reasoning), and ulul albab (those with profound reason) demonstrate that the activity of thinking is not only

encouraged but also constitutes an integral part of intellectual worship in Islam. These messages encourage reflection, analysis, and exploration of meaning, rather than passive acceptance. Thus, critical thinking is not a new concept adopted from the West, but rather a fundamental value embedded in Islamic texts and practices from its inception (Rindengan, 2023).

Further developments were evident in the golden age of Islamic civilization, particularly during the classical period between the 8th and 13th centuries. This period was marked by extraordinary advances in science, philosophy, and medicine, taking place in centers of learning such as Baghdad, Cairo, Cordoba, and Damascus. Figures such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd played a crucial role in developing a rational and systematic Islamic intellectual tradition. They not only translated classical Greek works but also criticized, reconstructed, and synthesized them with Islamic theological principles. In their view, reason was not the opposite of revelation, but a vital instrument for its profound understanding. Their thinking became the foundation for the development of Islamic philosophy, grounded in logic, empirical observation, and rational analysis, in line with Islamic values (Lubis et al., 2023).

In addition to philosophy and science, the tradition of critical thinking is also manifested in the practice of ijtihad, the intellectual effort to explore Islamic law from its sources (Hidayati et al., 2025). The concept of ijtihad involves methodologies that encourage independent and creative thinking, such as qiyas (legal analogy), istihsan (rational preference), and maslahah mursalah (public benefit). Mujtahid scholars do not rely solely on literal texts but also consider the social context and the welfare of the community. This approach demonstrates that Islam teaches openness to the dynamics of the times through a rational and responsible thought process (Prayogi, 2020). Therefore, the intellectual heritage of Islam from the early to the classical period is evidence that critical thinking has been a key pillar of the Islamic educational and scientific system, and is relevant for revival in addressing the challenges of 21st-century education.

B. The Decline and Revival of Critical Thinking

Entering the 14th century AD, the intellectual dynamics of the Islamic world experienced a significant decline. One of the main causes was the dominance of the practice of taqlid, namely following the opinions of previous scholars without adequate critical review. This practice led to intellectual stagnation and a decline in the spirit of ijtihad, which had previously been a hallmark of Islamic intellectual progress. On the other hand, the fragmented political conditions of the Islamic world, the weakness of central authority, and increasing intervention by foreign powers exacerbated the situation. Colonialism, which penetrated various Muslim regions, had a destructive impact on the education and scientific systems, as traditional institutions such as madrasas and Islamic boarding schools began to lose their autonomy and experienced structural and ideological pressures (Kusumasari et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the orientation of Islamic education has begun to shift from a rational and reflective approach to a more textual, dogmatic, and defensive one. The curriculum emphasizes memorization and mastery of classical texts without balancing it with the development of critical reasoning and contextual relevance. The learning process, which initially fostered scientific thought and discussion, has become a rigid routine that is closed to innovation. This has created a gap between religious knowledge and the ever-evolving challenges of the times, leaving Muslims lagging behind in the face of modernization, science, and technology. In fact, the spirit of critical thinking and ijtihad, once the strengths of the Muslim community in the past, should serve as the foundation for responding to changing times creatively and finding solutions (Juwan & Siswadi, 2023).

However, in the 19th century, an intellectual revival emerged known as the Islamic Resurgence, or Islamic renewal movement. Figures such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha pioneered the revival of the spirit of ijtihad and rationality in Islam. They rejected stagnant thinking and criticized the practice of imitation (taqlid) that hampered the progress of the Muslim community. This movement emphasized the importance of adapting Islamic teachings to modern demands without losing their essence. They called on the community to re-explore the values of the Quran with a contextual and rational approach, and to integrate modern science into the Islamic education system. This effort marked the beginning of a new revival in the Islamic world, reaffirming that critical thinking is an authentic Islamic heritage that must be re-empowered to address global challenges (Yudha et al., 2022).

C. Application of Critical Thinking in the History of Islamic Education

a. The Use of Reason in Understanding Revelation

One of the important legacies of the Islamic intellectual tradition is the encouragement to use reason as a means of understanding revelation. The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were known to actively use ijtihad to resolve various problems not explicitly found in the texts of the Quran or the hadith. They did not simply wait for answers from revelation, but instead took the initiative to think and discuss based on the general principles of sharia. In the development of Islamic theology, as reflected in the Maturidiyah school of thought, reason is seen as a complement to revelation, even a primary tool for understanding the doctrines of faith. The balanced and responsible use of reason is seen as a manifestation of deep obedience to God, because humans are given reason as a mandate to examine, analyze, and actualize the values of revelation in life (Dwijayanti, 2021).

b. Ijtihad and Deliberation as Critical Culture

The concept of ijtihad is the most prominent form of critical thinking in the Islamic legal tradition. Ijtihad involves a process of in-depth analysis of legal sources to address new issues not explicitly addressed in the texts. Ijtihad requires not only extensive knowledge but also a keen reasoning ability and sensitivity to social

context. Furthermore, deliberation is also a crucial component of ethical thinking in Islam. Deliberation teaches the importance of open discussion, the exchange of ideas, and collective decision-making. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself set an example in this regard, such as in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, where he involved his companions in the decision-making process. This tradition of deliberation reflects democratic values and respect for collective thinking in resolving the community's problems (Firdausi et al., 2021).

c. Diversity of Opinions and Scientific Tolerance in Islam

The Islamic scholarly tradition is also rich in ikhtilaf (differences of opinion), which is one of the main characteristics of the dynamics of critical thinking. From the time of the Companions to the classical scholars, differences of opinion were not seen as divisions, but rather as a form of blessing in scholarly discourse. Scientific discussions between scholars were conducted with strong arguments but remained in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Differences in schools of thought, jurisprudence, or interpretive approaches are clear evidence of the space for pluralism in Islam. This tolerant attitude towards differences teaches the importance of open-mindedness, flexibility, and the ability to understand that truth can be approached from various perspectives, as long as it is based on scientific principles and sharia values (Khoirunnisa & Fikri, 2023).

D. Qiyas and Contextualization of Thought

One important method of critical thinking in Islam is qiyas, or legal analogy. Qiyas requires the ability to identify the illat (legal reasoning) of a case and then apply it to a new case with similar characteristics. This process requires not only a mastery of legal principles but also skills in logical analysis and social contextualization. Qiyas is an important tool in expanding the scope of Islamic law to keep it relevant to changing times. In the contemporary context, this method is particularly useful in addressing new issues that arise with the development of science, technology, and modern society (Rini, 2019).

These traditions confirm that critical thinking has long been an integral part of the treasury of Islamic scholarship. Activities such as ijtihad, deliberation, qiyas, and respect for differences of opinion demonstrate that Muslims possess a rich, open, and dynamic system of thought. Therefore, critical thinking is not a foreign cultural product or an import from the West, but rather an integral part of Islam's intellectual identity, which needs to be continuously explored and developed, particularly in the context of 21st-century education.

E. The Relevance of Critical Thinking in Islamic Education to 21st Century Skills

The 21st century is marked by the rapid flow of information, globalization, and technological disruption that have transformed nearly every aspect of life. In the context of education, this creates new challenges for students, especially the Muslim generation, who are required not only to possess intellectual intelligence but also to possess the skills to sort information, think reflectively, and make

decisions based on moral values. The digital era has opened up widespread access to diverse information, but on the other hand, it also brings the potential for misinformation, polarization of views, and ethical crises. This is where critical thinking skills become crucial as a primary foundation for responding to the complexities of the times in a wise and responsible manner (Mardhani et al., 2022).

The Islamic tradition of critical thinking makes a significant contribution to addressing this challenge. From its inception, Islam has emphasized the importance of reason as a tool for understanding revelation and the realities of life. Quranic verses that use terms such as ta'aqilun, yatafakkarun, and yatadabbarun demonstrate that critical thinking is not foreign to Islam but rather part of its spiritual guidance. With this approach, Muslim students can be taught to ethically filter information, evaluate arguments based on truth and value, and make decisions that consider the common good. This approach shapes learners' character not only as intelligent but also as possessing integrity and social awareness (Alam, 2020).

Furthermore, critical thinking skills are also an integral part of the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) approach in modern education. HOTS emphasizes analytical, evaluative, and creative abilities—not simply memorizing facts. This aligns closely with Islamic thought practices such as ijtihad, qiyas, and ikhtilaf, which train reasoning skills, test assumptions, and construct arguments based on logic and context (Salim et al., 2024). Therefore, the integration of Islamic tradition and the HOTS approach in education will produce students who are adaptive to change, critical in their thinking, and adhere to moral and spiritual values (Susilowati & Sumaji, 2021).

The 4Cs (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity) concept, a key pillar of 21st-century skills, also resonates strongly in Islamic teachings. For example, effective communication is reflected in the etiquette of dialogue and tabligh (Islamic outreach); collaboration is reflected in the practice of deliberation and brotherhood; creativity is evident in the legacy of Islamic civilization in science, architecture, and literature; and, of course, critical thinking is the essence of contemplation, reflection, and ijtihad. Islamic education that instills these values in a contextual and applicable manner will equip students to become individuals who not only excel academically but also are able to make a real contribution to building a just, civilized, and sustainable civilization.

F. Strengthening the 4C Concept in Islamic Education

a. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a foundational 21st-century skill, heavily emphasized in modern education. In Islam, this ability is not a foreign concept; in fact, it has been a vital part of the treasury of knowledge since its inception. The Quran repeatedly encourages Muslims to use reason and think reflectively, as reflected in verses that use the words yatafakkarun, ya'qilun, and yatadabbarun. The practices of ijtihad, qiyas, and deliberation are concrete manifestations of the application of critical thinking in Islamic legal, social, and political contexts. Ijtihad teaches the

importance of in-depth analysis of a problem, qiyas trains logical reasoning skills based on legal analogies, and deliberation fosters a culture of open dialogue in decision-making (Redhana, 2019).

b. Creativity

Creativity in Islam is understood as creative power based on divine and ethical values. Since the Golden Age of Islam (8th to 13th centuries), Muslims have produced various innovations in medicine, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, and architecture. Figures such as Al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Zahrawi are living proof of a creative spirit guided by Islamic principles. In the context of 21st-century education, creativity is essential to address complex problems through innovative solutions, while remaining grounded in ethics and moral values. Islamic education that encourages students to question, experiment, and create will produce a generation capable of competing globally without losing its Islamic identity (Wardani et al., 2021).

c. Communication

Effective and civilized communication is an essential part of Islamic teachings. Quranic communication principles such as qaulan sadida (truthful speech), qaulan ma'rufa (good speech), and qaulan layyina (gentle speech) serve as guidelines for establishing polite, honest, and empathetic communication patterns. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was also known as a master communicator, able to convey messages persuasively, clearly, and compassionately. In modern education, communication skills are needed not only to convey ideas effectively but also to build healthy social relationships. Islamic education must integrate these Quranic communication values into the learning process so that students are not only proficient in speaking but also wise in conveying and receiving information (Wibawanto & Prihatin, 2023).

d. Collaboration

Collaboration in Islam is reflected in the concepts of ta'awun (mutual assistance in good deeds) and ukhuwah (brotherhood). Islamic history records various forms of collective cooperation in building a just society, such as the zakat system, the Baitul Mal (the public trust), and the practice of shura (deliberation), which involves collective participation. In education, collaboration is crucial for developing social skills, empathy, and teamwork. Islam teaches that success is not always achieved individually, but through synergy and harmonious cooperation. Therefore, Islamic education needs to foster an inclusive and tolerant attitude in cooperative learning, group discussions, and cross-disciplinary collaborative projects.(Jochebed, 2019).

G. The Relationship between the 4C Concept and the Three Domains of 21st Century Skills

a. Life and Career Skills

Life and career skills include leadership, social responsibility, flexibility, and adaptability to change. In Islam, values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), and ihsan (sincerity) form a strong foundation for developing professional and responsible individuals. Muslims are expected to work ethically, lead fairly, and serve the community with sincerity. Therefore, the integration of Islamic values and life skills will produce individuals who are resilient, ethical, and capable of living meaningful lives and careers (Zifarma, 2022).

b. Learning and Innovation Skills

These skills include critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, all of which have been integral to Islamic tradition. The development of science throughout the history of Islamic civilization demonstrates that Muslims have a strong tradition of learning, underpinned by the spirit of seeking knowledge. Institutions such as the Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad and the madrasahs in Damascus became centers of innovation, producing monumental works. Contemporary Islamic education needs to revitalize this spirit so that students can become lifelong learners who adapt to the challenges of the times (Faisal, 2019).

c. Information, Media, and Technology Skills

In the digital age, the ability to sort and evaluate information is crucial to avoid hoaxes, hate speech, and media misuse. The Islamic tradition of critical thinking provides an ethical and intellectual foundation for addressing these challenges. The principle of tabayyun (clarification) in the Quran teaches that information must be verified before being disseminated. Furthermore, Islam emphasizes moral responsibility in using technology. Therefore, Islamic education needs to teach digital literacy based on the values of honesty, responsibility, and caution so that students become intelligent and ethical users of technology.(Dwijayanti, 2021).

Islamic education has a long-standing tradition of integrating intellectual and moral development, rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, to form balanced individuals. In the modern era, the need to align these traditions with the demands of 21st-century education becomes increasingly urgent. This study aims to analyze the development of critical thinking in Islamic educational traditions and its relevance to 21st-century skills. The research method used is a qualitative narrative approach through library research, examining written sources such as books, journals, and articles to understand concepts and phenomena in depth. The results of the study indicate that since its inception, Islamic education has emphasized the use of reason and reasoning in the learning process through the practices of ijtihad, deliberation, and scientific tolerance. This tradition forms the foundation of critical thinking relevant to modern learning. The integration of Islamic values with 21st-century skills, particularly the 4C skills (critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration), has the potential to improve the quality of Islamic education and prepare students to face global challenges intelligently, adaptively, and with character. This research provides a conceptual contribution to the development of curricula and learning strategies that combine Islamic knowledge with the demands of 21st-century skills.

Implications of this study are significant for current Islamic educational practices. Teachers and educational practitioners can adopt learning strategies that encourage critical questioning, problem-solving, and collaborative learning while embedding Islamic ethical values. By doing so, students are not only equipped with intellectual skills but also with moral grounding, enabling them to apply knowledge responsibly in real-life situations. For educational policy, the findings support the need for policies that promote the integration of faith-based values with 21st-century competencies. Governments and educational authorities can design teacher training programs, assessment systems, and resource allocations that align with both global educational standards and Islamic principles. This approach ensures that Islamic schools are competitive at a national and international level without losing their religious identity.

In terms of curriculum development, this study provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for integrating Islamic values into 21st-century skill-based curricula. Curriculum designers are encouraged to thoughtfully structure learning content and activities that actively foster critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (the 4Cs) within an Islamic worldview. This integration goes beyond mere content addition; it involves embedding ethical and spiritual principles that shape students' character and decision-making processes. By incorporating case studies, problem-based learning, and reflective exercises grounded in Islamic teachings, learners can develop higher-order thinking skills while deepening their understanding of faith.

4. Conclusion

The tradition of critical thinking in Islamic education, rooted in practices such as ijtihad, deliberation, and scientific discussion, continues to serve as a strong foundation for cultivating reason and intellectual rigor alongside spiritual growth. This study confirms that Islamic education inherently values rationality and higher-order thinking, as reflected in concepts like tabayyun (verification), tafaqquh (deep understanding), and tadabbur (reflection). These values align closely with the demands of 21st-century skills, particularly the development of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. By integrating these 4Cs into the Islamic educational framework, students are better equipped to face contemporary challenges with a balanced mindset—combining ethical and intellectual strengths. This integration not only enhances students' academic abilities but also strengthens their character, encouraging responsible and solution-oriented behaviors. The findings emphasize the importance of revitalizing critical thinking traditions within curricula, pedagogy, and school culture. While this study offers a solid conceptual foundation, further practical research is needed to explore effective strategies for implementation across diverse Islamic education contexts.

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