

## Improving the Professional Competence of Primary *Madrasah* Teachers in Responding to the Challenges of 21st Century Islamic Education

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**ABSTRACT:** *The highest level of human resources is a fundamental requirement for developing industrialised countries, and Islamic education is the foundation for producing the best human resources. The role of teachers as educators is integral to the success of the Islamic education process. Therefore, qualified and experienced educators are needed. This article aims to identify the difficulties of teachers' professional competence in the context of school teaching. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo is an assisted school, and the research informants are effective subject teachers and principals. The average professional quality of effective subject teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo, 68.13%, is in the "Very Good" category, according to observation data. This shows that the productive subject teachers of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo have a strong level of professional knowledge in the field of education. The results of the interview analysis show that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo upholds professional skills and supports this conclusion. This can be observed in person or during regular school reflections.*

Sumber daya manusia yang berkualitas tinggi merupakan syarat utama bagi perkembangan negara industri, dan pendidikan Islam merupakan fondasi untuk menghasilkan sumber daya manusia yang terbaik. Peran guru sebagai pendidik merupakan bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dari keberhasilan proses pendidikan Islam. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan tenaga pendidik yang berkualitas dan berpengalaman. Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan kompetensi profesional guru dalam konteks pengajaran di sekolah. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo adalah sekolah binaan, dan informan penelitian adalah guru mata pelajaran efektif dan kepala sekolah. Rata-rata kualitas profesional guru mata pelajaran produktif di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo sebesar 68,13% berada pada kategori “Sangat Baik”, sesuai dengan data hasil observasi. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa guru mata pelajaran produktif Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo memiliki tingkat pengetahuan profesional yang kuat dalam bidang pendidikan. Hasil analisis wawancara yang menunjukkan bahwa Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo menjunjung tinggi kemampuan profesional mendukung kesimpulan ini. Hal ini dapat diamati secara langsung maupun saat refleksi rutin sekolah.

**Keywords:** *Instructor, Competency, Professional skills.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education can be regarded as a deliberate and organised effort to enhance the quality of human resources, enabling them to compete in the face of modern advancements. Consequently, Islamic education is often described as a significant long-term investment in the development of future generations. The role of teachers as educators is integral to the success of the Islamic education process. Thus, qualified and experienced lecturers are essential (Lestari & Masyithoh, 2023).

Globalisation significantly impacts every level of society. In the rapidly evolving technological landscape of the twenty-first century, students are growing and adapting. Technology's widespread and rapid development defines human life in this era, with technology playing a vital role in nearly every human endeavour. An increasing level of proficiency in human resources also accompanies technological advancements. The twenty-first century emphasises developing specialised and fundamental skills to produce competent individuals. The primary goal is to ensure people can navigate life and overcome challenges, ultimately fostering greater adaptability.

Indicators of 21st-century talent include life and work skills, creativity, the ability to search for information, and proficiency in technology and information media. These skills equip individuals with knowledge about interpersonal relationships, survival strategies, and competitiveness. Indeed, 21st-century society is prepared to be self-reliant and competitive. Education in the 21st century ensures that students can utilise technology and information media, engage in learning and innovation, and apply life skills in their work and personal development. This concept of 21st-century education can be realised by designing classes that prioritise learning, creativity, and skills in technology and information resources. The purpose of supporting materials is to foster professional and life skills. Naturally, mastering basic literacy skills in reading, writing, and mathematics remains essential for success across all these disciplines (Saefuddin et al., 2023).

Teachers must collaborate with students in the twenty-first-century classroom to generate new learning discoveries. A teacher's ambition to lead in the digital revolution of the twenty-first century must be grounded in their mastery of 21st-century skills. Technology, while significant, is not the sole tool used in 21st-century education to develop the skills students need. Teachers must also know how to guide students in asking profound questions to nurture critical thinking. Teachers can achieve several objectives in developing 21st-century skills, including 1) Partner in Learning: The teacher acts as a learning partner for students, testing their understanding through questions and responses to cultivate critical thinking; 2) Community Builder: The teacher fosters strong relationships with students to create a supportive learning environment; 3) Motivator: The teacher designs experiences that connect with students' problem-solving abilities and knowledge, encouraging engagement and growth. (Asiyah, 2022).

Developed countries must prioritise the development of human resources, and Islamic education plays a crucial role in this regard. It is essential for cultivating better human resources, particularly within Islamic educational institutions. To achieve the vision and goals of these institutions, professional personnel, effective organisational procedures, and adequate financial and non-financial support are required. Teachers, in particular,

play a pivotal role and must have a passion for their work in schools. Student learning outcomes will improve when teachers successfully fulfil their educational responsibilities and obligations towards their students.

In formal Islamic education, including early childhood education (PAUD) and Islamic primary and secondary education, teachers are professional workers whose primary responsibilities include teaching, guiding, assessing, training, mentoring, and evaluating students. Teachers are the most critical individuals in learning activities in line with these responsibilities. Their role is to guide, educate, and prepare students for adulthood. As educators, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping high-quality schools. Numerous factors influence a school's success, including infrastructure, curriculum implementation, teacher and lecturer performance, the school atmosphere, and more. The ability of the educational environment to foster quality outcomes is undeniable (Hasibuan & Prastowo, 2020).

Muchlas Samani and Wahyudi (2012:3) stated that in Indonesia, educators must hold a minimum degree in Islamic education, alongside certification and teaching credentials. Teachers must demonstrate they possess the essential skills to fulfil their roles and meet the minimum standards required to attain a Diploma IV or Bachelor's degree in Islamic education. To perform effectively, instructors must possess fundamental teaching competencies. These competencies encompass a range of intellectual skills and responsibilities, including teaching, guiding, assessing, training, and evaluating students.

Teacher competence, conversely, refers to a teacher's ability to fulfil their professional responsibilities as an educator. Competence is defined by possessing knowledge, skills, and core values reflected in a person's mindset and behaviour. A teacher's capacity to perform daily tasks is shaped by the knowledge, abilities, and fundamental beliefs they cultivate and develop throughout their lives. As teaching is a profession, the ability to carry out teaching responsibilities must be approached professionally. The knowledge, skills, and values that underpin an individual's ability to teach are essential and interconnected, meaning not everyone is suited to the role of a teacher simply by aspiration. This is especially true in the field of Islamic education. Therefore, only individuals with pedagogical expertise and a thorough understanding of Islamic education are qualified to teach. A teacher must meet specific requirements and undergo specialised training in Islamic education. Indicators of a competent teacher include the ability to apply various teaching concepts and principles, employ engaging and interactive teaching methods, and demonstrate qualities such as discipline, honesty, and consistency (Asiyah & Jazuli, 2022).

An individual working in the teaching profession is considered to possess professional qualifications if they demonstrate specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes reflected in responsible and intelligent behaviour. The curriculum represents the teacher's approach to the tasks that students must undertake during the learning process, acting as a benchmark for the teacher's professional competence. All learning resources are integral to the curriculum and must be understood by students in alignment with core competencies to meet the required competency standards for each topic in the Islamic education syllabus. Media serves as a teaching tool to support the instructional techniques employed by teachers in the classroom and enhance interaction between teachers and students and engagement between students and their environment. The

primary aim of the evaluation is to gather data on the effectiveness of teacher teaching and the learning outcomes achieved by students.

The process of measuring performance to ensure behavioural changes in students is referred to as assessment. Competencies include understanding the subject matter, meeting certification requirements, developing more effective learning strategies, making wise decisions, and utilising information and communication technology advancements. For individuals who have received an Islamic education, a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the competencies derived from it are equally important (Pratama, 2023).

The professional abilities of educators are currently underappreciated in society. The goals of Islamic education have not been fully realised due to the inadequate professional qualifications of teachers. The author suggests that the problem is that some educators still fail to incorporate media into their lesson plans, conduct substandard assessments of each student, cannot master effective teaching techniques, and often take notes during class instead of providing explanations. It remains challenging to discuss teacher professionalism and competence concerning the current reality of the education sector. In a 2014 study, Payong Sennenis (2017) discussed several issues teachers face, including factors that increase teacher certification and qualifications requirements: (1) Instructors are not prepared to embrace new learning innovations and tend to revert to old teaching methods. The programme does not directly impact improvements in student achievement. (2) The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme is not viewed as a strategic initiative to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills. (3) Teachers are directly involved in formulating policies relevant to their region and elections that influence their academic performance and interpersonal relationships with peers and colleagues. (4) teachers become entangled in a bureaucratic mindset when implementing the curriculum. (5) Even qualified instructors overlook the importance of motivation and encouragement for personal growth. According to Sennen's research (2017), the main issues regarding teacher professionalism and qualifications are as follows: a) Low teacher qualifications; b) Low motivation to improve teacher quality; c) Uneven distribution of teachers; d) Lack of awareness and enthusiasm to share knowledge and experience; e) Political issues in teacher placement and transfers; f) Weak teacher abilities in writing and implementing Classroom Action Research (CAR); and g) Many teachers exhibit a relaxed attitude towards their responsibilities (Kurniawati, 2022).

*Madrasah* institutions were established to meet the demand for high-quality Islamic education for commercial and industrial sectors. The primary objective is to instil a professional attitude in students and prepare them for the workforce. Therefore, *madrasah* graduates must be ready to compete in the job market and possess professional skills aligned with their competency programmes. As an important component of the national Islamic education system, vocational high schools or *madrasahs* play a crucial role in preparing and developing human resources, as outlined in the National Islamic Education System Law (NIESL). The purpose of Islamic secondary education, as stated in Article 20, paragraph 15 of the 2003 Law, is to train students, particularly for work in specific fields. Vocational institutions are one type of Islamic secondary education offered in Indonesia (*Madrasah*). Due to the frequent involvement of *madrasahs* with information technology, 21st-century learning significantly impacts schools. Life and career skills: Teachers demonstrate high levels of leadership and responsibility, are adaptable in their communication with the community both inside and outside the classroom, and are flexible in their interactions

with others. A teacher or trainer must be able to learn continuously throughout their life, be a creative and critical thinker, and remain capable of innovation. Educators transform into creative thinkers to enhance the quality and progress of Islamic education (Adha & Darmiyanti, 2022)

Islamic vocational education faces several challenges, including a shortage of instructors with real-world expertise, an overwhelming number of students, limited opportunities for practical application, and inadequate resources for learning support. Nonetheless, the role of teachers remains the primary focus when discussing the quality of education. The quality of graduates is undoubtedly impacted by the lack of qualified experts in their respective fields. The author's interest in examining the challenges of achieving professional competence among teachers at Darussalam Tatung Ponorogo Elementary School arises from the abovementioned issues (Al Faruq & Noviani, 2021).

### **Teacher Professional Competence**

Professional work or activities are tasks carried out with seriousness; they are not amateur endeavours and must meet certain standards to be considered professional. Such specialised roles require a high level of Islamic knowledge, expertise, and education. Since professional ability is defined as the opposite of amateur work, it can be concluded that professional instructors are specialists in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities, as opposed to hobbyists, part-time, or ordinary teachers. A competent teacher applies Islamic teaching and training to improve the quality of their work with dedication and awareness (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022).

Professional competence encompasses the various skills required to fulfil the role of a professional teacher. Proficiency in this area is essential for achieving professional competence, which includes knowledge of the curriculum and teaching strategies, accountability for one's work, and a sense of community among fellow educators. The professional competence of a teacher can be defined more broadly once we understand what is meant by being "competent." A teacher's ability to teach content comprehensively and in-depth mastering both the subject matter and the school curriculum, as well as the content and learning strategies used to help students grasp it defines the teacher's professional competence. Teaching is the application of content. This study was conducted with care and seriousness (Nurhalimah et al., 2024)

### **Teacher Competency Indicators**

Saud stated that the following are some of the competency markers that an educator needs to possess: (a). The ability to perform tasks well. When making decisions, an educator must be guided by a clear vision and mission based on critical analysis and reasoning. (b). The ability to manage information sources (theories and concepts, rules and principles, theories and generalisations, data and information) across all work areas. (c). Mastery of the knowledge and skills required to carry out their responsibilities, including strategies and tactics, methods and techniques, processes and mechanisms, tools and equipment. (d). Recognition of the minimum standard eligibility conditions, acceptable process conditions, and success criteria for work completed about threshold requirements (basic standards). (e). A strong sense of motivation and the willingness to put extra effort into completing tasks. This organisation seeks the best outcomes and is not satisfied with merely meeting requirements. (f). Authority can be identified when it reflects a set of abilities that, to some extent, can be tested and proven. (Jannah et al., 2023)

### Characteristics of Teacher Professional Competence

Teachers need to be qualified in several ways. This generally includes completing formal Islamic education and passing an aptitude and equivalency test to demonstrate intellectual proficiency. However, the specific requirements depend on the type and level of the teacher's Islamic education. Teachers who work in *madrasahs* must hold professional certification and any additional qualifications required.

Islamic vocational education encourages students to choose a specific career path, resulting in "a person developing into a fully functional individual" who actively participates in activities and strives to do their best, naturally improving their living standards. Therefore, teachers with high levels of competence and skill must guide and support students who demonstrate full behavioural capacity.

## II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to explore the phenomenon in depth, particularly concerning the professional competence of teachers at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam* Tatung Ponorogo. The research site was purposively selected due to its relevance to the study context. Participants included effective subject teachers and *madrasah* principals, chosen for their strategic roles in supporting professional development. Data was collected through in-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines, direct observation of classroom learning activities, and the analysis of documents such as lesson plans and learning records. This approach aims to gather rich, contextual data from various perspectives (Creswell, 2014)

Data analysis was conducted thematically, involving data organisation, coding, and identifying key themes related to teacher competency. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and time to confirm the accuracy of the findings (Sugiyono, 2017) This technique enables researchers to describe the reality in the field objectively and comprehensively. With this approach, the study aims to provide a thorough understanding of teacher professional competence in addressing the challenges of the 21st century and offer recommendations for developing such competence.

## II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 21st Century Islamic Education

The 21st century has seen significant changes and shifts in Islamic education due to globalisation and technological advancements. One of the major issues facing Islamic education today is the lack of technology integration into the teaching and learning process. This can diminish teaching efficiency and hinder students' ability to overcome future challenges. Proper integration of technology in Islamic education is essential to maximise its benefits. Islamic education must adapt to society's social and cultural changes (Saefuddin et al., 2023).

An open and non-discriminatory attitude towards women and minority groups is essential to promote gender equality and reduce social disparities in society. Methods that are more contextual and aligned with the local socio-cultural environment can enhance the effectiveness of achieving the goals of Islamic education, which include promoting Islamic values in society and developing moral character. Islamic education

must adapt to the demands of the modern world. Curriculum materials that meet the needs of society and the workplace should be incorporated. Teaching must be more inclusive and participatory to improve learning outcomes and student engagement.

Many things have changed in the world in the twenty-first century, including in Indonesia. Particularly with the advancement of technology and knowledge in this century, there has been a significant shift in how people think. Society recognises the 21st century as the century of knowledge, which has become the foundation for various perspectives, especially in social interactions. The 21st-century thinking model greatly emphasises teaching students to think critically, apply their knowledge to real-world situations, understand information and technology, and collaborate and communicate effectively.

Globalisation has led to rapid advances in science and technology, expanding the responsibilities of these fields and highlighting the need for moral educators. As characteristics of globalisation, the magnitude of natural changes and the speed of scientific and technological development will likely result in setbacks for countries whose populations are not adequately prepared. Therefore, education must be of higher quality. As educational institutions, schools require communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills. These skills are commonly referred to as follows (Baroya, 2018)

1. The process of language exchange that occurs between individuals is called communication. Therefore, communication is required in interpersonal, group, and mass situations. Teachers must educate students on how to communicate with one another in the classroom and other contexts, both with their peers and with the instructor. The language students use to communicate has an impact on them.
2. Collaboration. When students actively participate in small group instruction, they learn more effectively. When the material is presented in small groups, students tend to remember it for longer and learn more than when it is presented in large groups.
3. Problem-solving and critical thinking: Everyone should be able to think. Thinking is an innate ability that manifests in all aspects of everyday life. There are various levels of thinking, from the most basic, which only requires reflection, to the most advanced, which demands contemplation. Critical thinking is a methodical and explicit process when it comes to mental tasks such as problem-solving, decision-making, persuasion, evaluating assumptions, and research. The ability to think methodically is known as critical thinking.
4. Innovation and Creativity: Creativity is generating original, practical, and understandable ideas or thoughts. Whether in the form of a discovery or invention, innovation refers to any concept, object, event, or method that is considered or perceived by an individual or group of people (society) as something new. Innovation is believed to help solve specific problems or achieve particular goals.

Teachers in the twenty-first century have the following characteristics (Pristiwanti et al., 2023):

1. Teachers must have a strong interest in reading.
2. The ability to write academic papers is a requirement for teachers. In addition to having a strong interest in reading, teachers must also be proficient in writing

scientific papers, as students' assignments from lecturers often involve various components.

3. Teachers assign various tasks to their students, such as writing short essays, magazine articles, and book reviews.
4. Teachers must be proficient writers to carry out all of these tasks. Educators need to apply creativity and innovation when implementing teaching approaches. Teachers must be imaginative and creative in order to introduce learning models that can enhance students' knowledge to meet the demands of 21st-century education. Students are encouraged to be creative and innovative when using digital technology and effective learning methods. Teachers should also be culturally adaptive. A "student-centred" approach must replace the "teacher-centred" approach to learning, assigning students topics that allow them to grow and learn as much as possible (Asiyah & Jazuli, 2022).

One strategy for facing the challenges of the 21st century is to apply the principle of religious moderation in Islamic religious education. Chaos is rampant in civilised society due to the rapid advancement of information technology, which has made it possible for people to access anything, anywhere. This also enables easy interaction with students and access to various materials. One topic that often influences students' religious sentiments is extreme and intolerant religious dogma. In response to the challenges of the 21st century, Islamic religious education places significant emphasis on religious moderation. These values align with the Pancasila student profile in the independent curriculum, which includes faith and devotion to God Almighty, independent and critical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, and global diversity. Given the challenges of a disruptive education system in the 21st century, Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in empowering students by nurturing a strong sense of faith and devotion to God Almighty while instilling noble morals in line with the goals of national education, as outlined in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003.

### **Teachers' Contribution to Improving the Quality of 21st Century Education**

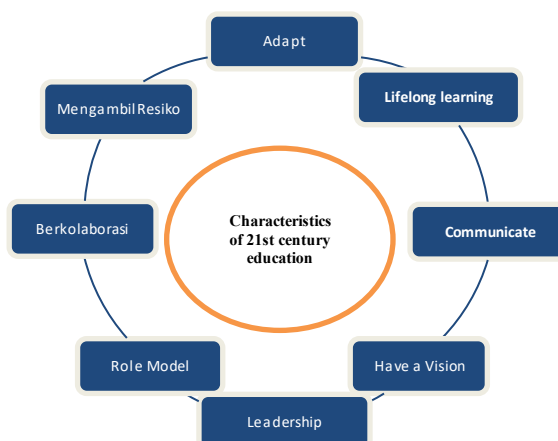
Educators play a vital role in ensuring that students receive a high-quality education. Here are some ways teachers contribute to advancing educational quality: designing learning activity programmes, implementing and organising them, assessing their effectiveness, and conducting evaluations. The implementation of educational tasks is key to this process. Teachers play an essential role in student education within the classroom. The first step in a teacher's role is planning the learning, setting student learning objectives, and preparing assessments. Teachers must incorporate 21st-century skills into their teaching, such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creative and innovative thinking (Septikasari & Frasandy, 2020).

Instructors significantly influence learning activities and the quality of educational outcomes, which ultimately enhance student education and achievement. As they teach students daily, instructors play a crucial role in educational progress. As mentors, community members, coordinators, managers, and organisers of learning, among other roles, teachers are key in implementing teaching and learning activities. Given the many benefits of having instructors in schools, they serve as a symbol of multifunctional education. Teachers are expected to contribute with professionalism. The goal is for the donation to significantly impact the quality of education. School leaders must prioritise children as the central focus, have a clear vision and work objectives, maximise teacher involvement, and implement a targeted curriculum to foster the growth of excellent



teaching. Every component of education must contribute to quality education. To achieve educational goals, all educational components must maintain a positive outlook and a strong work ethic.

Good student performance and employment outcomes after graduation are indicators of high-quality education. The work ethic of educational institutions and the specialisations their graduates achieve are closely linked to the quality of education. Ultimately, the quality of education depends on what the school produces. The proportion of students with academic and extracurricular achievements and the potential to become successful graduates is a measure of the quality of education. Claims that education is of poor quality or does not adequately prepare students for the jobs required by the final goods produced are key indicators of this issue.



**Figure 1.** *Characteristics of 21st century education*

Teachers in the twenty-first century must also be proficient in several areas. The digital competencies of 21st-century teachers consist of the following: 1). Data literacy (the ability to find, select, assess, and manage information relevant to student learning); 2) Communication (the ability to communicate effectively using digital technology); 3) Learning content creation (the capacity to develop digital learning materials through the use of tools such as PowerPoint, videos, and online platforms); and 4) Problem-solving (the ability to address technology-related challenges required for teaching). Achieving these skills requires recognising the limitations of digital technology and applying creativity to use it effectively. Problem-based, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning approaches are increasingly prevalent in 21st-century education. Teachers can use these methods to help students develop essential 21st-century skills. Students' problem-solving abilities are enhanced through project-based learning, which also fosters discussions about their learning outcomes. Students engaged in problem-based learning must possess critical and analytical thinking skills. To acquire new knowledge, they are presented with challenges that must be solved using their existing knowledge. By promoting cooperation and collaboration among students, cooperative learning enhances their motivation to actively participate in the learning process (Jainiyah et al., 2023).

Developing creative and effective learning models presents a significant challenge for educators in the twenty-first century. To improve learning outcomes, twenty-first-century educators must foster positive relationships with students and colleagues, integrate technology to enhance instruction, and regularly reflect on and evaluate their

teaching practices. Educators are also encouraged to incorporate technology into the classroom effectively.

The factor that undoubtedly has the greatest influence on the implementation of education is the teacher. Teaching is a profession that significantly impacts the quality of the education system; in other words, the quality of the teacher or instructor is a crucial factor in determining the overall quality of the education system. The teaching profession serves as the frontline and the primary safeguard of education.

As a teacher or educator, you want the knowledge you impart to students to be effectively absorbed and applied. Educators must first consider how to deliver the material in a way that enables students to process and use it effectively. The delivery method should help students fully grasp and internalise the essence of the material, allowing them to apply it in the future. Therefore, an educator must thoroughly prepare for every learning activity. This includes planning and organising all learning components, such as learning models, strategies, media, assessment questions, and lesson plans (RPP). Naturally, teaching methods and resources must align with the principles of 21st-century learning (Jannah et al., 2023).

The importance of teachers' ability to communicate lesson content is often emphasised. Developing this skill can create effective learning conditions and stimulate students' interest in the subject matter. As educators, it is essential that teachers encourage their students to improve their mastery of various skills throughout the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Instructors are expected to implement Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based learning during the learning process. HOTS combines students' knowledge and experience critically and creatively to overcome challenges. If a student can apply their knowledge to solve a problem in a new or innovative way, they are considered thinking at a higher level or the HOTS level (Muflihin & Makhshun, 2020).

By incorporating 21st-century skills into education, every student is intended to acquire the skills necessary for life in the 21st century, with all the opportunities and challenges that arise in today's highly advanced technological and information-driven society. Experts argue that, in a rapidly and dynamically changing world, mastering a range of 21st-century skills is essential for achieving success.

### **The Implementation of 21st-Century Skills in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

Applications for the Twenty-First Century are Islamic Skills for Religious Studies. To compete effectively amidst the disruptive challenges of the 21st century, individuals must possess the necessary skills. This is a period of globalisation, marked by rapid and significant changes replacing old paradigms and creating new international issues (Elitasari, 2022).

Everyone must acquire 21st-century skills to successfully navigate life, work, and other challenges. These skills must be integrated into learning activities, as the 21st-century education paradigm places significant emphasis on students' capacity for critical thinking, real-world application of knowledge, ICT proficiency, and teamwork. The "4C" framework, as defined by the National Education Association, represents the essential 21st-century skills: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Ainina, 2022).

The disruption in this century has led to the digitalisation of the education system, resulting in a complete transformation of the learning process. Digital learning models

are revolutionising the classroom by offering a more innovative, inclusive, diverse, and comprehensive educational experience. The National Education Association states that the following skills are essential for the 21st century: critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (skills based on the "21st Century Partnership Learning Framework"), contextual learning skills, creativity and innovation skills, communication and collaboration skills, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, and information and media literacy.

21st-century learning equips the current generation to meet various demands and challenges worldwide. The rapid growth of information and technology in this century has impacted all aspects of human life, including education. The traditional Islamic Religious Education paradigm, which focuses on cognitive skills and is dominated by lecture-based methods, must be adapted to reflect the characteristics of the 21st-century education model. This includes integrating educational technology, the strategic roles of lecturers and students, innovative teaching and learning methods, contextual learning materials, and a distinct, independent curriculum structure. *Madrasahs* and Islamic educational institutions face several challenges in the 21st century, such as the need for curriculum reform to align with the demands of the modern curriculum, a spiritual revolution among teachers, and the integration of technology into the classroom (Khotimah et al., 2022).

Based on the analysis of the observation data, 94.11% of subject teachers effectively prepare students before starting learning and educational activities, 41.17% implement understanding, and 76.47% explain the competencies that students should acquire after the learning and educational activities. Additionally, 94.11% explained the competencies to be gained, while 52.94% provided a brief summary of the material presented. These findings are derived from the observation indicators of learning activities. Moreover, 76.47% of teachers connect the material being taught with previously covered content, while 23.52% revisit previous material and review class content. The percentage of 65.54% is derived from the earlier description of the percentage value for preschool activities.

The research findings show that 94.11% of subject teachers have successfully mastered their subjects, 76.47% connect their materials with related information, and 76.47% deliver the material clearly, following the learning hierarchy and considering the characteristics of their students. Additionally, 41.17% involve students in determining their own learning needs, 94.11% link the curriculum to real-world experiences, and 100% connect the classroom to the workplace. The percentage value of 80.39% is derived from the previous description regarding the management of learning resources.

When measuring teaching techniques and strategies, it is found that 82.35% of teachers consistently implement learning, and 70.58% of teachers align their teaching with the objectives/indicators for competency acquisition and character development. Learning completion stands at 64.70%, contextual learning at 100%, student characteristics contribute 41.17% to learning completion, and expected time distribution contributes 29.41% to learning completion. The total percentage value of 64.70% reflects the explanation of the percentage value of the teaching methods/strategies

Based on the research findings, 88.23% of students utilised learning media effectively and efficiently, 70.58% created engaging messages, 41.17% involved students in using the media, and 82.35% used textbooks in the teaching and learning process. These are key indicators of the utilisation of learning resources, particularly learning media. With

additional resources related to teaching materials, 64.70% of teachers explained lessons using resources such as projectors, teaching aids, and audiovisual equipment. The overall percentage value of 69.41% can be derived from the description of the percentage value regarding the use of teaching aids or learning environments above.

The following are the findings of learning indicators that initiate and sustain student engagement: 64.70% of teachers generate students' joy and enthusiasm; 100% of teachers maintain an open attitude towards student responses; and 70.58% of teachers are able to encourage active student participation in learning. Additionally, 64.70% of instructors believe they learn best when working in groups, engaging in discussions, or studying the material together in class. 52.94% of teachers deliver lesson content in an engaging style to prevent students from becoming bored, while 88.23% create an educational atmosphere, and a supportive classroom environment fosters students' desire to learn.

Based on the previous definition, 72.54% of classroom learning activities initiate and sustain student engagement. Only 29.41% of instructors monitor student progress during learning, while 100% of teachers conduct final evaluations based on competencies (objectives). Regarding process and learning outcome evaluation indicators, productive subject teachers can be categorised as reasonably proficient in assessing their students' learning process and outcomes. This assessment is based on the percentage values provided for process and outcome evaluation, resulting in a total percentage of 64.70%.

The findings show that 100% of instructors use spoken and written language clearly, accurately, and knowledgeably. In terms of language use indicators, 94.11% of educators deliver their teaching accurately. The total percentage value of 97.05% is derived from the previous explanation regarding the percentage value of language use. This indicates that productive subject teachers can be categorised as very proficient language users in the classroom. Regarding activities that determine observation data indicators, it was found that 100% of instructors provide instructions, assignments, or activities for improvement or enrichment after reflecting on or summarising information about their students. This accounts for 58.82% of teachers' responses. The percentage value of 79.41% is obtained from the earlier description of the percentage value of decision-making activities.

Let's first talk about self-reflective indicators. One of the key components in evaluating teacher professionalism is asking teachers to reflect on their own practice (Wahyudi & Kurniasih, 2021). Teachers who consistently evaluate their work are more likely to improve themselves and achieve the best results. It is hoped that this approach can also be applied to their professional development. The researchers found consistency in the observational data based on interviews conducted with successful subject instructors.

Teachers at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam* Tatung Ponorogo engage in self-reflection exercises. However, the intensity of these reflections varies for each teacher and is determined by the school. General reflection is conducted by the school at the end of each semester. Nonetheless, teachers often carry out self-reflection after delivering a chapter on a subject, such as following daily assessments, mid-semester projects, or end-of-year assignments. In this context, test scores serve as a benchmark to measure the level of student understanding and identify areas where the teacher still needs to improve to facilitate better learning.

The majority of educators recognise the value of self-reflection, which enhances professionalism and is considered an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Additionally, the school mandates that instructors conduct classroom action research, which further emphasises this concept. By collaborating, we can improve Islamic religious education in schools, all while acknowledging that this is a reflection of teacher quality. Furthermore, educators who frequently organise workshops, provide technical assistance, deliver lectures, and engage in similar activities must continue to develop their skills to remain up to date. Secondly, regarding the application of ICT for teacher self-development in overcoming career challenges, *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam* Tatung Ponorogo has technically competent teachers, as indicated by interview findings. Teachers also need to stay informed about recent advancements in student communication, particularly when it comes to individual study programmes. This facilitates communication between educators outside of scheduled class times. The inability of teachers to attend face-to-face sessions is not a barrier, as teachers can provide information from anywhere. This is made possible by using technology through platforms approved for use as learning aids. Additionally, this programme is employed for educational purposes at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam* Tatung Ponorogo.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the professional competence of teachers at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Darussalam* Tatung Ponorogo is classified as very good, with an average competency level of 68.13%. This reflects a strong understanding of the subject matter, technology-based learning management, and the ability to apply 21st-century strategies such as critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation. However, challenges such as optimising technology integration and improving reflection skills still require attention. Therefore, a continuous professional development programme that not only emphasises mastery of pedagogical competence but also integrates 21st-century skills with Islamic values is needed. The implication is that *madrasahs* must be more proactive in providing training based on the needs of teachers and supporting learning innovations that are relevant to global developments.

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