
Teacher Competency in Implementing Islamic Education Learning - Based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Teachers play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the learning process and outcomes. Quality learning can be realized if teachers have strong competence in their fields of study, especially pedagogical competence that is closely related to learning practices. This is especially relevant in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), where Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based learning needs to be studied further at the junior high school level. This study aims to examine the pedagogical competence of teachers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of HOTS-based PAI learning, as well as to identify the factors that influence these competencies at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan, Pamekasan. Using a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, the results of the study showed that the pedagogical competence of teachers in planning HOTS-based PAI learning was classified as good, as evidenced by the preparation of a good lesson plan (RPP). The implementation of PAI learning is in accordance with the planned strategy, which shows that the implementation of learning in the classroom is going well. Likewise with the evaluation of learning that has been carried out well. This study also identified several factors that influence teachers' pedagogical competence in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education learning, including student characteristics, environmental context, teacher qualifications, and school policies.

Keywords: Pedagogical Competence, Islamic Education, *Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a long-term investment in human resource development, possessing strategic value for the sustainability of human civilization worldwide (Tafsir, 2014). Therefore, the majority of countries worldwide make education a primary element and priority in their national development agenda. Indonesia also positions education as a fundamental pillar in the nation-building process. As Kusnandar (2010) stated, this aligns with the mandate of the fourth paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, which affirms that educating the nation is one of Indonesia's primary goals.

One crucial factor in achieving national education goals is the presence of teachers. Teachers are central actors in the entire education system and deserve primary attention and priority. Teachers always occupy a strategic position when discussing educational issues, as their existence is inseparable from various other elements within the education system.

The contribution of teachers to improving the quality of education is vital. Teachers are often compared to the "soul" of the education system. As emphasized in the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs (2011), teachers are professional educators with primary responsibility for educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Without teachers, the educational process would lose its meaning. However, the role of other educational personnel is equally important.

Synergy and collective work among all elements of education are determining factors for the success of the learning process in the school environment.

Competence is defined as a person's ability to carry out tasks or responsibilities in accordance with their assigned role. Article 10 Paragraph (1) of Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers explains that "Teacher competence, as referred to in Article 8, includes pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence acquired through professional education." Furthermore, Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 16 of 2010 and the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree of 2011 concerning teacher qualification and competency standards added two specific competency aspects for Islamic Religious Education teachers: spiritual competence and leadership competence.

One crucial competency that teachers must possess in implementing the learning process is pedagogical competence. According to Kunandar (2007), pedagogy is the science that discusses education within the scope of educational interactions between educators and students. Meanwhile, pedagogical competence refers to a teacher's ability to understand student characteristics, develop learning plans, implement the learning process, conduct learning evaluations, and develop student potential so that they can optimally actualize their abilities.

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Islamic Religious Education (ISE) is a conscious effort by educators to prepare students to believe in, understand, and implement Islamic teachings through structured activities in the form of guidance, teaching, and training, all directed toward achieving predetermined learning objectives. According to Zakiah Daradjat (2009), Islamic Religious Education is the process of fostering and nurturing students so that they are able to comprehensively understand Islamic teachings, internalize their values, and ultimately practice them in their daily lives and use them as a guide for life.

According to Fanani and Kusmaharti (2018), learning in the 2013 Curriculum is designed to encourage students to actively seek and discover information, rather than simply passively receiving knowledge. This curriculum also emphasizes the importance of language skills as a means of communication and as a means of logical, systematic, and creative thinking. Fanani (2018) explains that thinking is part of the cognitive domain, as classified by Bloom into six levels of cognitive processes, namely: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Anderson and Bloom (2001) then revised this taxonomy into two categories: lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) which include remembering (C1), understanding (C2), and applying (C3), and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) which include analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). HOTS can be interpreted as a process when students receive new information and connect it with previous knowledge through an in-depth analysis process.

Thus, it can be concluded that the application of HOTS in learning requires students to be able to analyze, evaluate, and create. These skills enable students to apply them in real life, particularly in solving problems they face, through the ability to integrate knowledge into new situations. Several previous studies relevant to the HOTS theme include those conducted by Abdullah, Abidin, and Ali (2015), who examined student errors in solving HOTS problems on fractions; Abdullah et al. (2016), who examined mathematics teachers' understanding and practices in implementing HOTS; and Pratama and Retnawati (2018), who examined the urgency of HOTS content analysis in mathematics textbooks. These studies address a similar theme, HOTS, but have different objectives.

This study selected SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan as the research location based on initial observations and interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers. Since 2015, this school has been developing a HOTS-based curriculum. However, in the field, teachers encountered challenges implementing HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, particularly because the material was sourced from e-books that needed to be adapted to HOTS indicators. Furthermore, teachers reported that students still experienced difficulties in participating in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, which requires critical thinking through the processes of analysis, evaluation, and creation. This was also reflected in learning outcomes, which were deemed suboptimal.

Based on these initial findings, the researcher assumed that mastery of teacher competencies, particularly pedagogical competencies, is crucial to supporting the effectiveness of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Therefore, SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan was considered a relevant location for this research, given the gap between

expectations and reality that requires in-depth study to find solutions to existing problems, particularly related to teacher pedagogical competencies in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive method. According to Basri (2015), the descriptive method is a research approach that aims to provide an overview of the characteristics of individuals, conditions, phenomena, or certain groups. Through this method, facts, symptoms, events, as well as the nature and character of teachers' pedagogical competence in planning, implementing, and initiating learning, as well as factors that influence Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, can be described in detail according to real conditions in the field. This study also uses a qualitative approach as explained by Sugiyono (2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Darul Hikam Middle School does not explicitly state that learning is directed at strengthening Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), but HOTS aspects are an essential part of the learning process. This is because higher-order thinking skills are a key competency required in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, where HOTS is listed in Core Competency 4 (KI-4) as part of students' cognitive achievements. Therefore, the integration of HOTS into every subject, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI), is imperative.

In an interview conducted on Monday, September 9, 2019, the Vice Principal for Curriculum, Mr. Yudianto, stated:

"In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, since 2015, we have been referring to the 2013 Curriculum and have made adjustments to integrate the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) approach. Teachers have also been directed to teach using this approach, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects."

This statement confirms that SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan has implemented HOTS principles in its teaching, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The learning process is designed to engage both teachers and students in higher-order thinking activities.

Structurally, in the Islamic Religious Education syllabus for junior high school students based on the 2013 Curriculum, HOTS is included in Core Competency 4 (KI-4), which emphasizes analytical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. The learning implementation document, the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP), prepared by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pamekasan, explicitly includes HOTS indicators, particularly in the form of activities that develop reasoning skills, process information, and present results creatively. The RPP is designed based on the scientific approach mandated by the 2013 Curriculum.

Regarding learning models, Islamic Religious Education teachers apply various approaches, such as cooperative learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and role-playing, as recommended by Brookhart

(2010). The choice of model is tailored to classroom conditions and the characteristics of the teaching material. Specifically, when teaching Islamic Religious Education material based on HOTS, teachers tend to use problem-based learning models more frequently. In an interview, an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher stated: "The models vary, tailored to students' needs so they don't get bored. However, for HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material, I often use problem-based learning."

The implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan has been ongoing since 2015, in line with the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of HOTS-based learning in all aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation in every subject. This aligns with the statement of the Principal of SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, Gatut Kusminto, when interviewed by researchers on Monday, May 5, 2025. He explained:

"Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based learning has actually been implemented since 2015, because the 2013 Curriculum recommends that every learning process integrate HOTS concepts, both in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. For Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, we also emphasize this to the teachers."

The principal's statement emphasized that the HOTS approach has been integrated into all subjects at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The school curriculum has been adjusted and modified to align with HOTS principles, which are consistently implemented from the planning stage through implementation and evaluation of learning, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

This study used observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The researchers conducted in-depth data exploration to obtain qualitative, authentic, and proportional information. Based on the research results, findings will be presented regarding teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan. This discussion of teacher pedagogical competence covers three main aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning, as well as the factors influencing these competencies.

Teacher Pedagogical Competence in HOTS-Based Islamic Education Learning Planning at Darul Hikam Middle School

Musfah (2012) defines competence as an individual's ability to carry out a task in accordance with assigned responsibilities. Competence is also closely related to certain standards, stating that a person is considered competent if their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work results meet established benchmarks or are recognized by institutions or the government. Essentially, competence is a combination of mental and physical strength in carrying out tasks or skills acquired through continuous training and practice. Therefore, competence can be developed through professional development, including through training for educators (Asyhari & Hariyanti, 2020).

According to Law Number 14 of 2005, Article 10 Paragraph 1, teacher competence refers to the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes reflected in intelligent, responsible, and professional actions in carrying out the role of learning facilitator. Meanwhile, Article 8 Paragraph 1 of the same law states that teacher competence encompasses four main aspects: pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence. Furthermore, referring to Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 16 of 2010 and Minister of Religious Affairs Decree of the Republic of Indonesia Number 211 of 2011, which regulate teacher qualification and competency standards, two additional competencies are added for Islamic Religious Education teachers: spiritual competency and leadership competency.

This research focuses on teacher pedagogical competency, which is directly related to the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). According to Kunandar (2007), pedagogy is the study of the role of teachers, with a limited scope of educational interactions between teachers and students. Pedagogical competency itself is defined as a teacher's ability to understand students, design and implement learning, evaluate learning, and develop students to actualize their potential.

Pedagogy functions to examine phenomena or situations with teachers as the object of study, while also providing guidelines for how teachers should act in educating students. Thus, pedagogy not only describes the condition of teachers factually, but also contains normative values that guide teacher behavior in the educational process.

In this study, researchers described the HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning plan at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamkasan based on observation, interview, and documentation data. The HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process at this school was implemented according to a previously designed program. Islamic Religious Education teachers implemented the lesson plan as outlined in the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP), as evidenced by the alignment between classroom learning activities and the RPP content. Although some classes required teacher improvisation to accommodate student needs, the learning process remained effective, and learning objectives were achieved. This demonstrates that while the RPP serves as the primary reference, teacher creativity is essential in managing classroom learning.

According to Mulyasa (2009), learning is the actualization of the curriculum, requiring teachers to create and develop student activities in accordance with the predetermined plan. Therefore, lesson planning is crucial because good planning will result in an effective and meaningful learning process.

From this definition, it can be concluded that learning is a deliberate and systematic process designed to facilitate individual learning activities. In other words, learning is external and must be carefully planned to support the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process. Based on the research results, the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan went well and was conducive because the teachers had carried

out thorough planning. In practice, teachers used a Problem-Based Learning model that encouraged students to think critically and creatively in solving problems, as well as practicing analytical, evaluation, and creative skills. As stated by one PAI teacher:

"In HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, we use the Problem-Based Learning model as outlined in the lesson plan. This model is implemented so that students can develop higher-order thinking skills to solve the problems they face."

Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), according to Anderson & Bloom (2001), include the levels of analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). HOTS can be understood as the process by which students receive new information and relate it to existing information stored in their memory through in-depth analysis.

Based on the research findings and referenced theories, the researcher concluded that the HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lesson planning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan was considered good. This conclusion is based on the description of research results, which indicate that PAI learning using the HOTS approach has been implemented since 2015. The researcher also found that HOTS concepts are included in learning materials such as the syllabus and lesson plans, supported by documentation from PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan. Based on this documentation, it can be concluded that PAI teachers possess good competency in lesson planning.

Teacher Pedagogical Competence in Implementing HOTS-Based PAI Learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan

Researchers described Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, although it does not explicitly emphasize HOTS (Host-Subjective Learning). However, this aspect remains a crucial element of the school's teaching and learning process. This is because HOTS-based PAI learning is one of the core competencies required for students. In accordance with government policy through the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, HOTS is included in the skills competency known as "Core Competency 4" or "KI-4," and therefore must be integrated into every learning process.

In an interview with researchers on Monday, September 16, 2019, the principal of SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, Gatut Kusminto, stated: "HOTS-based learning has actually been implemented since 2015, in accordance with the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes HOTS-based learning. Likewise, in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PAI learning, we emphasize that teachers always refer to HOTS concepts."

Referring to the problem formulation in Chapter I, this study examines the HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, encompassing three main aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Based on the research data, the HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan proceeded according to the established program. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers implemented learning in accordance with the established plan, as evidenced by the alignment between the lesson plans (RPP) and all classroom learning activities between teachers and students. In general, the

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process was implemented well and in accordance with the RPP, although in some classes, teachers improvised to accommodate student conditions to ensure the learning process ran smoothly and learning objectives were achieved. These adjustments are necessary, given that the RPP serves as a guideline for learning implementation; however, its implementation depends heavily on the teacher's creativity in classroom management.

According to the researchers, the quality of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is highly dependent on teacher competence and professionalism. The teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan have proven competence and extensive teaching experience, automatically creating a conducive learning environment, particularly in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This teacher competence and professionalism also impact students' respect for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, both inside and outside the classroom.

Regarding the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, as explained in Chapter II, higher-order thinking skills, or HOTS, according to Gunawan and Ali (2013), are thought processes that require students to specifically manipulate information and ideas to generate new understandings and implications. Limpan (in Kusnawa, 2013) emphasizes that higher-order thinking involves critical and creative thinking based on meaningful notions of truth. Critical and creative thinking are interdependent, as are criteria and values, and reason and emotion.

According to Ahmad et al. (2017), through HOTS, students are able to clearly differentiate ideas, put forward sound arguments, solve problems, construct explanations, form hypotheses, and understand complex concepts more deeply. Thus, HOTS requires students to be able to identify ideas in detail, argue logically, solve problems, construct explanations, formulate hypotheses, and understand complex concepts more clearly.

Based on the researchers' observations during the learning process, the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) proceeded well and was conducive. Students demonstrated high enthusiasm for learning, paid attention to every explanation from the PAI teacher, and actively analyzed information. They were able to recognize and differentiate causal factors, identify and formulate questions, evaluate solutions, ideas, concepts, and methodologies, and formulate hypotheses, allowing them the freedom to accept or reject statements (Taufiqurrahman, Heryandi, & Junaidi, 2018). Furthermore, students were also able to create by determining their perspective on a topic, designing solutions, and organizing elements into new, unprecedented structures. Despite this, researchers found some students who were less than enthusiastic in their learning, but this did not disrupt the enthusiasm of the majority of students, who were active and enthusiastic. Such incidents are also very rare.

To answer the second research question regarding the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, based on the data obtained, researchers concluded that the learning process was conducted in accordance with the program established by the institution. Researchers assessed the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at

SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan as being in the good category, based on direct classroom observations. Furthermore, researchers obtained information that teachers used Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Product-Based Learning (PBL) methods, both of which aim to explore students' potential in analyzing, evaluating, creating, solving problems, drawing conclusions, and generating hypotheses independently related to the material being taught.

Based on the explanation above, researchers concluded that the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan was running well. This conclusion was derived from the alignment between institutional policies, the learning materials developed by the PAI teachers, and the implementation of the learning process, which was carried out in accordance with the teacher's plan.

Teacher Pedagogical Competence in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-Based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Evaluation at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan

Researchers have described in their findings that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan consistently design and implement learning evaluations. In fact, at every meeting, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers prepare and implement learning outcome evaluations as outlined in the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP). Evaluation is a crucial aspect that teachers, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, must undertake.

Evaluation is a systematic process for assigning value to objects, processes, performance, activities, outcomes, objectives, or other aspects based on specific criteria through assessment. Evaluation must be carried out by teachers, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. Researchers conducted direct observations by joining the classroom during the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' evaluations during the last mid-semester assessment. The evaluation process was orderly and conducive, and the evaluation instruments used were deemed sound. Therefore, the researcher was satisfied with the evaluation conducted by the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher.

According to Usman (1994), the ability to evaluate learning outcomes includes the following indicators:

1. Ability to design and implement assessments, including understanding assessment principles, developing various learning evaluation instruments, and implementing the evaluation itself.
2. Ability to analyze assessment results, including classifying results and drawing clear conclusions.
3. Ability to utilize assessment results to improve the quality of subsequent learning, for example by correcting invalid questions and identifying variations in learning outcomes.

These dimensions and indicators can be seen in Table 1 below:

No	Dimensions	Indicator
1	Designing and implementing learning evaluations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation of the learning process 2. Evaluate learning outcomes with authentic assessment 3. Providing feedback 4. Repair program

Regarding Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers, Mr. Amir, stated: "Learning evaluation is crucial. Teachers must assess students across three domains: affective, psychomotor, and cognitive, particularly the cognitive domain directly related to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). After completing the learning material, teachers are required to provide students with exercises to gauge their mastery of the material. These assessments also serve as feedback for teachers to assess the effectiveness of the learning methods used, allowing them to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning, both from the teacher and the students' perspectives."

Researchers responded to this statement by observing how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan conducted evaluations, including assessing evaluation instruments developed by the teachers, which were based on the concepts and principles of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Seeing this, the researchers were satisfied with the efforts of the Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan in developing evaluation instruments that align with HOTS standards.

Through in-depth observations during the learning process, researchers found that at the end of each session, Islamic Religious Education teachers consistently provided evaluations aligned with Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) indicators. These evaluations required students to analyze information, recognize and differentiate causal factors, and identify and formulate questions. Furthermore, students were expected to evaluate by assessing solutions, ideas, and methodologies, formulating hypotheses, and were given the opportunity to accept or reject statements. Students were also required to be creative by determining perspectives on a topic, devising problem-solving strategies, and organizing elements into a new, previously nonexistent structure.

Based on the interviews, observations, and documentation conducted, researchers determined that pedagogical competence in evaluating learning outcomes is a crucial skill for teachers in determining the success of the learning process. Through these evaluations, teachers also received valuable feedback for improving the quality of future learning. Referring to the data presented, the researcher concluded the answer to the third research question as stated in Chapter I, namely, regarding pedagogical competence in evaluating Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at SMP Darul Hikam Bandung. Islamic Religious Education teachers at the school consistently conduct learning evaluations, even at every meeting to determine the level of achievement of learning objectives and outcomes.

The researcher directly observed how teachers designed and implemented Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning evaluations. From these observations, the researcher concluded that the design and implementation of evaluations conducted by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan were successful, in accordance with the plan outlined in the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP), which includes evaluation of the learning process, evaluation of learning outcomes using authentic assessment, provision of feedback, and improvement or remedial programs.

Based on the previous description, the researcher concluded that the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan was successful. This conclusion was drawn from the alignment between the policies implemented by the institution, the learning materials developed by Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the implementation of evaluations that aligned with the plans developed by the teachers. Researchers observed that teachers consistently implemented learning evaluations, including at every class meeting, in accordance with the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP).

Factors Influencing Teacher Pedagogical Competence in Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-Based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan

Based on the research findings outlined in the discussion section, the factors influencing teacher pedagogical competence in Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan are divided into two categories: supporting factors and inhibiting factors.

Referring to the data presented, the researcher concludes the answer to the fourth research question, regarding the factors influencing teacher pedagogical competence in Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan, as follows:

Supporting Factors

The researcher has described the supporting factors for teacher pedagogical competence in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan based on observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at the school.

Interviews with the Deputy Head of Curriculum revealed several supporting factors for the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, including:

1. The majority of students already own and are proficient in using mobile phones, which the Deputy Head of Curriculum views as a potential support for HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.
2. Although some teachers are still undergoing an adaptation process, teachers generally responded positively and were continuously made aware of the importance of improving their own competencies through intensive communication from the Deputy Head of Curriculum.
3. A solid curriculum team with a strong commitment to learning changes is a key supporting factor in implementing the HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning concept. According to Zwell in Sutedjo & Mangkunegara (2018), competency is influenced by the following factors:
 - a. Beliefs and values: An individual's beliefs in themselves and others significantly influence behavior; a positive attitude toward themselves and others demonstrates the character of a forward-thinking person.
 - b. Skills: Improving individual skills will contribute to increased competency.
 - c. Experience: Competence largely requires adequate experience.
 - d. Personality characteristics: A person's personality can change, but improving competence is not always easy.
 - e. Motivation: Support, appreciation, recognition, and attention from superiors positively influence subordinates' competence.
 - f. Emotional issues: Emotional barriers can limit competency

mastery.

- g. Intellectual abilities: Competence depends on cognitive thinking skills such as analytical and conceptual thinking.
- h. Organizational culture: Organizational culture influences human resource competence through recruitment processes, reward systems, decision-making, organizational philosophy, habits, commitment to training, and organizational processes.

In addition, fitness activities that focus on developing student character and behavior, as explained in school programs, are a supporting factor in the implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. In other words, a number of school programs are considered very helpful for Islamic Religious Education teachers in carrying out the learning process in the classroom.

An external factor supporting the implementation of this learning process is the Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Conference (MGMP PAI), which serves as a forum for teachers to share knowledge and experiences related to learning implementation. Thus, Islamic Religious Education policies and concepts based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) were well-received and implemented at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan.

The principal's policies and the learning concept design developed by the vice-curriculum principal are crucial factors supporting the smooth running of the Islamic Religious Education learning process. As an institutional leader, the principal plays a crucial role in determining the progress or decline of an educational institution. Furthermore, the vice-curriculum's role as a conceptualizer within the institution is effectively implemented at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan. Responsive to the dynamics of developments in the educational world, the vice-curriculum implemented the Islamic Religious Education learning concept based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) integrated with advances in science and technology, a significant innovation. This factor realistically serves as a key supporter in the implementation of learning.

Inhibiting Factors

Researchers have outlined factors that hinder teachers' pedagogical competence in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan Bandung through observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at the school. One of the inhibiting factors identified came from an interview with the 11th-grade Islamic Religious Education teacher, Mr. Usman Sidik, on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in the PAI teachers' lounge. He stated that although the classroom learning process was running well, there were a number of obstacles that needed attention, particularly related to environmental factors and the students' family circumstances. Mr. Usman explained that through collaborative visits with the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, data was found regarding students' poorly controlled social interactions outside of school and family conditions, such as broken homes, which significantly hinder optimal learning success.

According to Widoyoko (2016), teacher competence, particularly pedagogical competence in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, is influenced by various internal and external factors. Referring to Sutermeister's opinion, as cited by Widoyoko (2016:69), internal factors include teacher background, teaching experience, training, and work ethic. External factors include the institutional climate and

policies, work environment, facilities, infrastructure, and social conditions of the surrounding area.

Danim (2010) emphasized that teacher professionalism can be viewed from two main perspectives: the teacher's educational background and mastery of teaching materials, learning management, student management, and implementation of guidance duties. A teacher's educational background is a fundamental indicator that significantly influences teacher quality, as it determines the teacher's mindset, insight, and personality traits, which are closely related to their level of professionalism.

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, environmental factors outside of school, such as student relationships and certain social conditions, hinder the learning process. This finding is reinforced by collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers, which indicated the presence of behavioral deviations and juvenile delinquency, including among students from broken homes. These conditions are considered to significantly impact student concentration and achievement in the classroom. These socio-cultural factors of the family and surrounding environment directly and indirectly influence other students and ultimately impact the dynamics of learning.

To deepen our understanding of this issue, researchers also conducted an interview with a guidance and counseling teacher, Ms. Devi Yunitasari, on Wednesday, May 7, 2025, in the guidance and counseling room. This interview revealed that juvenile delinquency and the phenomenon of broken homes are often intertwined. Broken homes, which are generally caused by parental divorce, remarriage, or parental departure abroad, result in a lack of supervision, leaving students vulnerable to engaging in inappropriate social interactions and deviant behavior.

The interviews with the guidance and counseling teachers indicated that juvenile delinquency stems from students experiencing broken homes. This broken home environment is triggered by family situations that are perceived as not meeting the students' expectations. Factors such as parental divorce and parents leaving for work out of town are considered the main triggers leading students to engage in inappropriate social interactions, even leading to promiscuity. The lack of serious parental supervision and control is a complex issue that ultimately negatively impacts students' learning process in the classroom.

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the author concludes that the factors influencing teachers' pedagogical competence in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan are divided into two categories: supporting factors and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors stem from collaboration between teachers and students, creating a conducive learning environment. While inhibiting factors primarily stem from some students' inability to optimally engage in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning due to minimal parental attention and supervision.

CONCLUSION

Teachers' pedagogical competence in planning Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP

Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan has been designed and structured in accordance with the indicators listed in the 2013 Curriculum and adapted to the needs of the school. Although these programs are not explicitly designated as HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, they contain content that supports the implementation of HOTS in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at the school. Researchers also found that HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning was incorporated into learning materials such as the syllabus and Lesson Plan (RPP), as evidenced by documentation of the work of Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan.

The implementation of HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan followed the stages outlined in the RPP. Teachers employed Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Product-Based Learning (PBL) methods to explore students' potential in analyzing, evaluating, creating, solving problems, drawing conclusions, and generating hypotheses related to the material being taught.

In terms of learning evaluation, teachers' pedagogical competence was also demonstrated through the creation of evaluation instruments that adhered to the concepts and principles of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Teachers consistently conducted evaluations for each lesson to measure the achievement of learning objectives and outcomes. This was demonstrated by the alignment between institutional policies, the learning materials created by Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the implementation of evaluations that followed the plan outlined in the RPP and adhered to HOTS indicators that require students to analyze, evaluate, and create.

Factors influencing teachers' pedagogical competence in HOTS-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Negeri 2 Pegantenan Pamekasan are divided into two categories: supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include school policies and students' active participation in the learning process. Inhibiting factors include teacher competence, environmental conditions, and students who are not yet fully capable of participating in the learning process as expected.

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