

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 4C LEARNING (CRITICAL THINKING, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND COMMUNICATION) IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT SDN 05 SINTANG

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Abstract

The 21st-century learning paradigm emphasizes the development of four essential competencies known as the 4C skills: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. These competencies are considered fundamental for preparing students to face increasingly complex educational and social challenges. This study aims to analyze the influence of implementing the 4C learning approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fifth-grade students at SDN 05 Sintang, with particular attention to changes in the learning process. This research employed a qualitative approach using classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation as data collection techniques. The collected data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of the 4C approach positively transformed the learning process. Students became more active in discussions, demonstrated improved critical thinking when analyzing Islamic values, expressed creative ideas through group projects, collaborated effectively in solving problems, and communicated their opinions with greater confidence. The study concludes that integrating the 4C learning model into Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to creating a more interactive, student-centered, and meaningful learning environment.

Keywords: 4C Learning, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Islamic Religious Education, Qualitative Research.

Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century requires learning approaches that not only emphasize cognitive achievement but also develop students' higher-order thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and communication. These competencies are widely recognized as essential learning outcomes because they prepare students to respond to complex social, technological, and global challenges (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, educational institutions are expected to transform conventional teacher-centered instruction into student-centered learning environments that encourage active participation, inquiry, problem-solving, and collaborative learning.

One of the most widely recognized frameworks supporting twenty-first-century education is the 4C learning framework, which consists of Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. Critical thinking enables learners to evaluate information objectively, analyze problems, and make reasoned decisions. Creativity encourages students to generate innovative ideas and alternative solutions.

Collaboration develops teamwork, responsibility, and mutual respect among learners, while communication equips students with the ability to express ideas effectively in various learning contexts (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019). Collectively, these competencies are considered fundamental for preparing students to become lifelong learners who can adapt to the rapidly changing demands of society.

In Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reinforces the importance of developing twenty-first-century competencies through student-centered learning, contextual instruction, project-based activities, and collaborative inquiry. The curriculum encourages teachers to design meaningful learning experiences that integrate knowledge, skills, and character development rather than focusing solely on cognitive achievement (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022). Therefore, the implementation of the 4C framework has become increasingly relevant across various subjects, including Islamic Religious Education.

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a strategic role in developing students' religious understanding, moral values, spiritual awareness, and noble character. Beyond transmitting religious knowledge, PAI seeks to cultivate learners who are capable of reflecting upon Islamic teachings, solving ethical problems, interacting harmoniously with others, and applying Islamic values in their daily lives (Azra, 2019). Accordingly, integrating the 4C learning framework into PAI is expected to create more meaningful learning experiences by encouraging students to actively participate in discussions, analyze contemporary issues from Islamic perspectives, collaborate with peers, and communicate their ideas confidently and respectfully.

Previous studies have demonstrated that implementing 4C-oriented learning contributes positively to students' engagement, higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and communication abilities across different educational contexts (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Likewise, research on Islamic Religious Education indicates that active learning strategies, problem-based learning, inquiry learning, and collaborative approaches can improve students' participation and facilitate deeper understanding of Islamic values. These approaches encourage learners to construct knowledge actively rather than merely memorizing religious concepts.

Despite these developments, several challenges remain in classroom practice. In many elementary schools, Islamic Religious Education is still predominantly delivered through teacher-centered instruction, emphasizing lectures, memorization, and textbook-oriented learning. Such practices often provide limited opportunities for students to ask questions, analyze authentic religious issues, express creative ideas, participate in collaborative activities, or communicate their opinions openly. Consequently, the development of higher-order thinking skills and twenty-first-century competencies may not be fully achieved.

This condition also reflects an important research gap. Although numerous studies have discussed the implementation of twenty-first-century learning competencies, most have focused on science education, mathematics, language

learning, or secondary education settings. Comparatively fewer studies have examined how all four dimensions of the 4C framework are implemented simultaneously in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level, particularly within public elementary schools located outside major urban areas. Furthermore, previous research has frequently emphasized students' academic achievement rather than investigating how the implementation of the 4C framework transforms classroom interaction, learning participation, teacher facilitation, and students' learning experiences through qualitative inquiry.

At SDN 05 Sintang, teachers have gradually introduced learning activities that encourage student engagement through classroom discussions, collaborative assignments, presentations, and contextual learning. Nevertheless, there has been no comprehensive qualitative investigation examining how the implementation of Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication influences the overall learning process in Islamic Religious Education. Understanding these classroom dynamics is essential because meaningful educational innovation cannot be evaluated solely through learning outcomes but should also consider how students participate, interact, and construct knowledge throughout the learning process.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive qualitative exploration of the implementation of all four dimensions of the 4C learning framework within Islamic Religious Education for fifth-grade students at SDN 05 Sintang. Unlike previous studies that generally examine only one or two twenty-first-century competencies or focus primarily on learning outcomes, this research investigates how the integration of Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication transforms classroom learning processes, teacher instructional practices, student participation, and collaborative interaction in an elementary Islamic Religious Education context. Therefore, this study contributes empirical evidence regarding the practical implementation of twenty-first-century competencies in Islamic Religious Education and provides recommendations for developing more interactive, student-centered, and meaningful learning environments.

Based on the background above, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the 4C learning framework in Islamic Religious Education for fifth-grade students at SDN 05 Sintang and to examine its influence on classroom learning processes. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on twenty-first-century learning and provide practical implications for teachers in integrating the 4C competencies into Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive research design. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, participants' experiences, and the meaning they construct during the learning process rather than measuring variables quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the context of this study, the

qualitative approach was considered appropriate for exploring the implementation of the 4C learning framework in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and examining how it influenced classroom interaction, student participation, and the overall learning process.

The research was conducted at SDN 05 Sintang, involving fifth-grade students and the Islamic Religious Education teacher as the primary participants. The participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the implementation of the 4C learning approach. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies to obtain rich information from individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, allowing the researcher to obtain comprehensive information from multiple sources. Classroom observations focused on students' participation, interaction, collaboration, communication, and engagement during learning activities. The observations also examined how teachers facilitated critical thinking, encouraged creativity, organized collaborative learning, and promoted classroom communication throughout the instructional process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Islamic Religious Education teacher and selected fifth-grade students to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding the implementation of the 4C learning framework. This interview technique provided flexibility for participants to explain their experiences while allowing the researcher to investigate emerging issues related to classroom learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documentation was also collected to support the observational and interview data, including lesson plans, teaching modules, students' worksheets, assessment records, photographs of classroom activities, and other relevant instructional documents. The use of multiple data collection techniques facilitated data triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis consisted of three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, coding, and organizing information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the reduced data were presented systematically through narrative descriptions and thematic categorization to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns, relationships, and themes emerging from the data while continuously verifying their consistency throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was enhanced through prolonged classroom observation and triangulation of data sources and collection techniques. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was maintained by documenting the research procedures systematically, while

confirmability was achieved by ensuring that interpretations were grounded in empirical data collected during observations, interviews, and documentation.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the 4C learning approach (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fifth-grade students at SDN 05 Sintang contributed to significant changes in the classroom learning process. The integration of the 4C framework transformed the learning environment from a predominantly teacher-centered approach into a more student-centered learning experience. Students were not only positioned as recipients of religious knowledge but also became active participants who explored concepts, exchanged ideas, solved problems, and constructed understanding through meaningful learning activities.

1. Development of Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Religious Education

One of the important findings of this study is the improvement of students' critical thinking abilities during PAI learning activities. Students demonstrated greater ability to analyze Islamic values, provide arguments, and connect religious concepts with real-life situations. Instead of merely memorizing religious materials, students were encouraged to reflect on the meaning of Islamic teachings and apply them in different contexts.

The development of critical thinking is an essential component of twenty-first-century learning because it enables students to evaluate information, analyze problems, and make logical decisions. According to Facione (2020), critical thinking involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation, which are fundamental processes for developing independent learners. In Islamic Religious Education, critical thinking does not contradict religious learning; rather, it supports students in understanding Islamic teachings through reflection and contextual analysis.

The findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that active and inquiry-based learning approaches can enhance students' higher-order thinking skills by encouraging questioning, reasoning, and problem-solving activities (Zubaidah, 2016). Through discussions related to Islamic values, students at SDN 05 Sintang were given opportunities to examine moral issues, share perspectives, and develop reasoned responses based on religious principles.

2. Enhancement of Creativity through Learning Activities

The implementation of the 4C approach also encouraged students to develop creativity during PAI learning. The findings show that students were able to express their ideas through group assignments, presentations, and learning projects. Creative activities provided students with opportunities to interpret Islamic concepts in various forms, such as visual presentations, examples from daily life, and collaborative learning products.

Creativity is an important twenty-first-century competency because it encourages learners to generate new ideas, explore possibilities, and develop innovative solutions. According to OECD (2019), creativity involves the ability to engage productively in generating, evaluating, and improving ideas. In the educational context, creativity develops when students are provided with meaningful tasks that allow exploration and self-expression.

The use of creative learning activities in PAI also supports the development of character education. By allowing students to express their understanding of Islamic teachings creatively, learning becomes more contextual and connected to students' experiences. This finding supports the argument of Trilling and Fadel (2009) that creativity should be integrated into classroom activities because students need opportunities to create knowledge rather than only consume information.

3. Strengthening Collaboration among Students

Another significant finding is the improvement of students' collaboration skills. The 4C learning approach encouraged students to work together in completing assignments, discussing learning materials, and finding solutions to problems. During group activities, students learned to share responsibilities, respect different opinions, and achieve common goals.

Collaboration is a fundamental competency in twenty-first-century education because learning increasingly requires individuals to work effectively with others. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21, 2019) explains that collaboration involves the ability to work productively with others, demonstrate flexibility, and contribute to collective efforts. In this study, collaborative activities created opportunities for students to develop social skills while strengthening their understanding of Islamic values related to cooperation (*ta'awun*) and mutual respect.

The findings are also supported by Johnson and Johnson (2017), who explain that cooperative learning improves students' academic achievement as well as interpersonal relationships because learners actively support each other during the learning process. In the context of PAI, collaboration allows students to experience religious values through actual classroom interactions.

4. Improvement of Students' Communication Skills

The implementation of the 4C learning model also positively influenced students' communication skills. Students became more confident in expressing opinions, asking questions, presenting group work, and responding to classmates' ideas. These changes indicate that the learning process provided a supportive environment where students could practice verbal communication and develop confidence.

Communication skills are essential in twenty-first-century education because students need to convey ideas clearly and interact effectively in diverse situations. According to Voogt and Roblin (2012), communication competency is one of the key

skills required for learners to participate successfully in modern society. Effective communication also supports deeper learning because students develop understanding through dialogue and exchange of perspectives.

In Islamic Religious Education, communication skills are closely related to the development of respectful dialogue and ethical interaction. Classroom discussions provide opportunities for students to practice expressing opinions politely and appreciating different viewpoints. Therefore, integrating communication activities into PAI learning contributes not only to academic development but also to students' character formation.

5. Transformation toward Student-Centered Islamic Religious Education Learning

Overall, the findings demonstrate that implementing the 4C learning approach resulted in a transformation of the PAI learning process at SDN 05 Sintang. The teacher's role shifted from being the primary source of information to becoming a facilitator who guides students in exploring knowledge. Meanwhile, students became more actively involved in constructing their understanding through discussion, collaboration, creativity, and reflection.

This transformation reflects the principles of student-centered learning, where learners actively participate in the learning process and develop autonomy. According to UNESCO (2021), contemporary education should provide learning experiences that develop not only knowledge but also competencies, values, and social responsibility. The integration of 4C competencies into PAI therefore represents an important strategy for creating meaningful religious education that is relevant to twenty-first-century demands.

The findings also strengthen previous studies indicating that the integration of twenty-first-century skills into Islamic Religious Education can improve student engagement and create more interactive learning environments (Anwar, 2022; Rahman & Fitriani, 2023). However, this study provides additional contribution by examining the simultaneous implementation of all four 4C competencies in an elementary school PAI context through qualitative investigation.

Therefore, the implementation of the 4C learning model in Islamic Religious Education should be considered not merely as an instructional strategy but as an approach to developing students' intellectual, social, and moral competencies. By integrating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, PAI learning can become more meaningful and capable of preparing students to face future educational and social challenges.

Conclusion

The implementation of the 4C learning approach (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fifth-grade students at SDN 05 Sintang has demonstrated a positive contribution to transforming the classroom learning process. Based on the findings of the qualitative study, the

integration of 4C competencies encouraged students to become more actively involved in learning activities and shifted the learning environment from teacher-centered instruction toward a more student-centered approach.

The implementation of Critical Thinking activities enabled students to analyze Islamic values more deeply, reflect on religious concepts, and develop logical arguments based on their understanding. Creativity was developed through various learning tasks that encouraged students to express ideas, produce innovative learning products, and relate Islamic teachings to real-life experiences. Collaboration activities strengthened students' ability to work together, share responsibilities, respect different perspectives, and solve problems collectively. Meanwhile, communication activities improved students' confidence in expressing opinions, participating in discussions, and presenting their ideas effectively.

The findings indicate that the 4C learning model not only supports the development of students' cognitive abilities but also contributes to their social skills and character development. By integrating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication into Islamic Religious Education, the learning process becomes more interactive, meaningful, and relevant to the demands of twenty-first-century education.

Therefore, the application of the 4C learning approach in PAI can be considered an effective strategy for creating an engaging and student-centered learning environment at the elementary school level. This study suggests that teachers should continue developing innovative learning activities that integrate 4C competencies to enhance students' intellectual, social, and moral development. Future research may explore the long-term impact of 4C-based Islamic Religious Education learning on students' academic achievement, character formation, and ability to apply Islamic values in daily life.

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