

# Teachers' Practice in Implementing 21 ST Century Learning in Islamic Education: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the practices of Islamic Education teachers in implementing the 21st Century Learning (PAK-21) approach through a literature review analysis. PAK-21 is a learning method that emphasizes communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills within classroom teaching and learning processes. In the context of Islamic Education, this approach is viewed as an effort to enhance instructional practices to be more relevant to current and future educational needs. The study adopts a qualitative research design using document analysis of academic sources such as journals, research articles, and official PAK-21 guidelines. The findings indicate that the level of implementation of PAK-21 among Islamic Education teachers remains moderate. Although there are efforts to integrate PAK-21 elements into teaching, there are challenge its execution is often constrained by factors such as time limitations, lack of understanding of modern pedagogy, limited access to technological resources, and non-teaching workload. Furthermore, the study identifies several strategies employed by teachers to overcome these challenges. These include continuous professional development, the use of value-based Islamic approaches such as hikmah (wisdom) and nasihat yang baik (good advice), as well as support from school administrators. The study concludes that the successful implementation of PAK-21 in Islamic Education requires comprehensive support from various stakeholders to ensure its effectiveness. The implications of this study contribute to the professional development of teachers, the provision of appropriate teaching aids, and the improvement of educational policies that support pedagogical transformation in line with 21st-century learning within Islamic Education.

**Keywords:** Teachers Praticce, Islamic Education, 21st Century Learning, Pedagogical

## Introduction

Education constitutes a fundamental element in the life of every individual. Formal learning begins at the primary school level and continues through to university. In Malaysia, education is compulsory for all citizens, and parents are legally required to send their children to school

to obtain formal instruction. Within schools, students are exposed to a wide range of knowledge grounded in the National Philosophy of Education, which emphasizes the holistic development of the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social domains (JERIS) (PPPM, 2013). Learning based on this philosophy aims to cultivate individuals who are excellent and competitive across diverse fields. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on spiritual excellence to nurture a generation of morally upright individuals.

The concept of 21st Century Learning (PAK-21) represents a new dimension introduced within the educational landscape. Its relationship with the education system is closely intertwined due to its inherently dynamic nature. This dynamism arises from the fact that the education system is continuously exposed to changes and improvements directed towards positive outcomes. Clear impacts can be observed through the transformation of teaching methods, strategies, and approaches that teachers are required to adopt. These changes are driven by the evolving contemporary context, which has reshaped learning processes and influenced students' learning methods. Such developments exert significant influence on curriculum implementation, as the curriculum serves as a foundational policy designed to guide the process of student formation and development (Nason & Hanapi, 2019).

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013–2025 outlines six key aspirations for students to face the challenges of globalization: knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics and spirituality, and national identity. These aspirations are crucial to ensure that students develop a strong sense of curiosity and the ability to generate new knowledge across various fields grounded in intellectual inquiry. Consequently, a high-quality generation can be nurtured through a more systematic and dynamic education system aligned with the demands of the 21st century (Osman, 2023).

The 21st Century Learning (PAK-21) initiative has become a central focus within Malaysia's education system, with efforts launched by the Ministry of Education to embed learning characteristics that are more dynamic and relevant to contemporary needs. PAK-21 emphasizes student-centered learning, collaboration, and the integration of technology to enhance the learning experience. Within the context of Islamic Education, PAK-21 seeks to transform traditional teacher-centered and rote memorization approaches into more interactive and meaningful pedagogical practices. This includes the use of diverse teaching strategies and appropriate teaching aids to engage students and facilitate deeper understanding of Islamic concepts (Jamali & Tengku Kasim, 2020).

Although teachers are encouraged to adopt diverse pedagogical approaches and leverage information technology, many still struggle to integrate 21st-century skills into their teaching. This limitation hinders students' ability to develop competencies such as collaboration, problem-solving, and creative thinking, where information technology should serve as a central hub. To ensure students can effectively cultivate and apply these skills, teachers must possess broad knowledge, demonstrate competence, and be capable of embedding 21st-century skills into their instructional practices (Mahmud et. al, 2024).

The Malaysian learning environment has often been perceived as monotonous due to its exam-oriented culture, where teachers rely heavily on one-way communication without fostering meaningful interaction with students (Chuah & Mydin, 2022). This approach has

constrained the effectiveness of learning, resulting in student boredom and declining interest in their studies. In the context of Islamic Education, which aims to nurture morally upright individuals, such limitations pose significant challenges. Although the Islamic Education curriculum at the primary level is guided by the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP), and teachers are expected to design engaging instructional activities, current practices have been criticized for insufficient incorporation of creative elements (Mamat & Razak, 2023).

This is because teachers have not yet mastered the integration of 21st-century skills into their teaching. As a result, students' interest declines, which in turn affects their academic performance. Therefore, teachers need to know strategies for planning engaging lessons by integrating 21st-century skills into the lesson plans they prepare. In addition, teachers also face a shortage of resources to implement 21st-century learning. As we know, there are many teaching methods that can be applied in the classroom. However, there are also requirements that must be prepared or provided during the implementation of these methods, such as sufficient paper, reliable internet access, adequate gadgets, and so forth (Sien Ning & Mohd Rusli, 2025). Based on this issue, a literature analysis is required to examine previous studies on the practices of Islamic Education teachers in implementing 21st Century Learning (PAK-21). This is necessary in order to identify the challenges faced by Islamic Education teachers in particular.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing content analysis as the primary method to obtain accurate findings. The analysis focuses on previous studies concerning the practices of Islamic Education teachers in relation to 21st Century Learning (PAK-21), which constitutes the main objective of this research. Content analysis was conducted to derive insights into the teaching practices of Islamic Education teachers. According to Darusalam and Hussin (2024), qualitative methods encompass narrative inquiry into phenomena that occur within specific contexts.

### **Literature Review Analysis**

This paper provides a review of previous studies that discuss the practices of Islamic Education teachers in relation to 21st Century Learning (PAK-21). The issue remains relevant, as highlighted by Osman (2023), who noted that teachers' competencies in implementing PAK-21 are still at a relatively low level. This review examines teachers' readiness, practices, and challenges in applying PAK-21 within Islamic Education classrooms. The purpose is to determine whether Islamic Education teachers have effectively adopted PAK-21, particularly in the teaching of Islamic Education subjects.

#### *Teachers' Readiness*

According to Hamzah and Attan (2007), readiness refers to an individual's willingness and preparedness to undertake a given task. In the context of this study, the readiness of Islamic Education teachers (GPI) encompasses three main components: literacy (knowledge), skills, and attitudes, as outlined in Thorndike's Theory. Readiness reflects the mental and physical preparedness of teachers in delivering Islamic Education, which subsequently shapes their self-efficacy in the teaching and learning process (PdP). Skills refer to pedagogical competence applied during classroom instruction. Therefore, teachers must consistently

engage in in-service training to strengthen their knowledge and skills in specialized areas while adapting to contemporary pedagogical innovations (Salleh, 2012). Attitude, meanwhile, reflects the level of dedication and commitment teachers demonstrate in fulfilling their primary role as educators.

Past studies have defined teachers' readiness for PAK-21 as a combination of several critical dimensions. Mohamed Yusof and Othman (2025) analyzed readiness based on four aspects: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation. Their study, conducted among teachers in Petaling Perdana, found that readiness is a determining factor in the effectiveness of PAK-21 implementation. Knowledge involves teachers' understanding of PAK-21 concepts and pedagogy, while skills refer to their ability to apply these methods in teaching. Positive attitudes and high motivation serve as key drivers for sustained practice.

Omar and Ismail (2018) emphasized that readiness in terms of knowledge among Islamic Education trainee teachers plays a crucial role in creatively and innovatively applying Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. This view is supported by Mohd Kosnin and Md Saleh (2006), who argued that teachers with high cognitive readiness are capable of evaluating multiple aspects of abstract ideas. Similarly, Wan Ismail et al. (2016) asserted that readiness in knowledge, skills, and attitudes is a vital factor in ensuring effective teaching and learning.

From another perspective, Maimun et al. (2017) stressed the need to enhance teachers' readiness in applying information and communication technology (ICT) in Islamic Education, even though topics such as worship, faith, history, recitation, and notable figures are more often taught using textbooks rather than digital media. This is because changes in educational culture, mission, and teaching aids demand that teachers remain responsive and adaptable to remain relevant in contemporary education (Hassan & Mohd Aris, 2009).

Mohamad Hanapi et al. (2020) examined the readiness of primary school Islamic Education teachers in Port Klang, Selangor, focusing on cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (attitudes) aspects. Their findings revealed that teachers' readiness in knowledge was high, but their skills remained at a moderate level. In contrast, Rabiatul et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study involving four Tahfiz Model Ulul Albab (TMUA) teachers teaching Form Four students in different schools. Their findings indicated that teachers were prepared, understood PAK-21, and successfully applied it in Qur'anic skills instruction.

Usop and Tamuri (2023) reported that teachers' readiness to integrate technology into teaching and learning (PdPc) remains moderate. Similarly, Sabilan et al. (2023) found that teachers' readiness to implement hybrid learning based on technological skills was at a moderately low level. These findings suggest that many teachers remain passive in adopting technology, with some lagging behind mainstream educators. Mohd Nawi et al. (2020) also found that teachers' readiness to use multimedia platforms was weak. Thus, Islamic Education teachers must adopt a more open mindset and be prepared to integrate technology into PdPc in line with current educational needs. Technology in education should not be perceived as an innovation that contradicts Islamic principles, as argued by some conservative religious figures. Instead, it should be viewed as a tool to strengthen PdPc and enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Education in the digital era.

In line with this, Zainal Abidin and Othman (2025) highlighted that Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are a crucial element of PAK-21. Their conceptual paper analyzed teachers' readiness to integrate HOTS based on three dimensions: knowledge, attitudes, and technology use. Their analysis underscored that teachers' readiness remains a key issue requiring further exploration, indicating that awareness of HOTS does not necessarily translate into consistent practice.

Studies on teacher efficacy in implementing PAK-21 have also been conducted. Raja Yusof and Nik Yaacob (2022) investigated the efficacy of Islamic Education teachers in applying ICT-based teaching strategies. Their survey involved 174 secondary school teachers in Penang selected randomly. Findings revealed that teachers' overall efficacy was moderate, though their efficacy in teaching strategies was high. This study aligns with Hamzah and Razak (2022), who examined the efficacy of 106 Islamic Education teachers from 25 primary schools in Jasin, Melaka. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Results showed that teachers' efficacy in implementing PAK-21 was high, though differences emerged in terms of study focus and location.

Teachers' readiness in implementing PAK-21 is significant because it enables them to design effective teaching and learning strategies. Effective implementation depends on teachers' ability to plan learning objectives, with each activity carefully evaluated before execution. Based on previous studies, it is evident that teachers' readiness remains at a moderate level, which has hindered the optimal implementation of PAK-21 in classrooms.

#### *Teachers' Practices*

The subject of Islamic Education focuses on the application of Islamic principles in shaping the personality of a Muslim, taking into account the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional dimensions (Siti Khadijah & Mohd Isa, 2021). The responsibility of nurturing students' moral character and personality lies with Islamic Education teachers (GPI). This highlights the fact that social problems and the decline in students' morality are often associated with the quality of teaching delivered by GPI. The emergence of various issues and challenges involving students has attracted considerable attention, with one of the contributing factors to social problems being students' lack of understanding and appreciation of the subject. Consequently, teaching methods and the quality of GPI play a significant role in influencing students' engagement with Islamic Education.

A variety of teaching and learning styles are essential to create an engaging and enjoyable learning environment (Yusof & Razak, 2023). According to Tamuri (2021), the teaching methods employed by teachers during instruction can have a significant impact on students' development, particularly given the role of GPI as primary reference figures. Thus, teachers' teaching and learning styles exert diverse effects on students' learning experiences. Noh et al. (2015) found that teaching practices at the beginning of lessons were often uninteresting and poorly structured. Mohd Supuri and Zulkifli (2021) further noted that many teachers remain unskilled in implementing PAK-21 in schools, tending instead to rely on conventional methods. Similarly, Ishak et al. (2012) reported that some teachers were not adequately prepared to plan lessons and faced difficulties in problem-solving. Therefore, teacher readiness is crucial for understanding students' cognitive and emotional development, enabling better preparation (Jawas & Zulkifli, 2022).

Bakar (2016) argued that PAK-21 practices involve mastery of content by both teachers and students, as well as the ability to generate, synthesize, and evaluate information from diverse sources while respecting cultural differences. She emphasized that the effectiveness of such practices depends not only on classroom facilities and organization but also on student-centered activities. Teachers must act as effective facilitators both inside and outside the classroom and be equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to implement PAK-21. A lack of professional development in knowledge and skills may negatively affect the desired curriculum outcomes set by the Ministry of Education.

Regarding PAK-21 practices among GPI, several studies have demonstrated strong interest in this topic. These practices refer to teachers' mastery in applying PAK-21 skills in teaching and learning. Zhaffar (2018) and Othman (2017) employed qualitative approaches to evaluate critical questioning strategies in Islamic Education. Their studies emphasized the importance of considering factors such as question levels, timing, and delivery in stimulating students' critical thinking, focus, and emotional engagement. Questioning techniques are regarded as effective tools for eliciting critical ideas from students, while the 4Cs (collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication) have also been examined among GPI (Raja Ismail & Ismail, 2018).

The application of PAK-21 among Islamic Education teachers has been further explored in past studies. Kamarudin and Hamzah (2020) conducted a study on PAK-21 practices among Islamic Education teachers in Cameron Highlands, involving 97 respondents. The study aimed to identify levels of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, information technology, reflection, assessment, and problem-solving skills in teachers' PAK-21 practices. However, the study only reported pilot findings conducted among 30 teachers in Port Dickson. Wan Mohamad and Mat Teh (2020) examined PAK-21 practices among GPI based on the Qur'an, employing a needs analysis approach with purposive sampling involving 100 respondents from secondary schools in Terengganu. Findings revealed that PAK-21 implementation was at a moderate level, highlighting the need to develop a Qur'an-based Islamic Education PAK-21 model.

Research has also extended to trainee teachers. Raja Ismail and Ismail (2018) assessed self-practice among Islamic Education trainee teachers at Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail in applying PAK-21 concepts during school practicum. The study focused on 41 trainee teachers enrolled in January 2013, adopting a quantitative approach. Results indicated that PAK-21 implementation was at a high level, with a mean score of 4.01. In contrast, Jamali and Tengku Kasim (2020) examined PAK-21 practices in teaching taranum (Qur'anic recitation styles), focusing on trainee teachers in the Special Class for Qur'an Reading and Memorization Skills (KKQ). Using triangulation, six informants were involved, and findings revealed that they successfully implemented taranum teaching based on dynamic PAK-21 elements.

The practice of PAK-21 among Islamic Education teachers is highly significant in ensuring effective implementation. Such practices assist teachers in addressing challenges encountered during teaching and learning. Learning objectives can be achieved when practices align with PAK-21 principles. Moreover, teachers can devote greater attention to students by instilling values embedded within PAK-21. Thus, reviews of previous studies indicate that GPI practices in implementing PAK-21 remain at a moderate level.

*Challenges in Implementing PAK-21*

Challenges in the implementation of PAK-21 have been widely discussed in previous studies, as every educational reform inevitably encounters obstacles. Amir and Mohd Shukri (2019) examined the challenges and expectations related to the integration of qalbu-based education within PAK-21. Using a qualitative approach, their study explored the foundations of education that involve the spiritual heart (qalbu) in student learning. The integration of such values into 21st Century Learning can significantly impact students' academic achievement and success. Their findings identified four main challenges in embedding qalbu-based education within PAK-21: the aims and objectives of education, gaps in applying the core elements of the National Philosophy of Education (FPK), reliance on Western theories and psychology, and efforts to integrate Islamic-based education.

In contrast, Mohd Taher and Abu Bakar (2022) investigated the challenges of Islamic Education in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0). Employing a literature analysis method, their study examined content that aligns with the concept of digital education in IR 4.0 within Islamic Education. Overall, their findings suggest that Islamic Education is prepared to embrace the digital era, as it embodies a balanced approach to shaping individuals who are well-rounded in both worldly and spiritual dimensions.

According to Taher and Abu Bakar (2022), the primary challenge in implementing digital education in Islamic Education lies in the role of teachers. Traditionally, Islamic Education has been delivered continuously through high religious values, with knowledge transmitted carefully and inherited across generations via authoritative classical texts. However, the emergence of digital education requires teachers to adapt their teaching approaches to align with modern technologies. This poses particular challenges in teaching topics such as worship (ibadah), which demand direct demonstration to ensure students' comprehension. Teachers must therefore identify effective methods to translate these demonstrative skills into digital formats.

Another challenge concerns the integrity of religious content. In the digital era, religious information disseminated online is often unfiltered and can be uploaded by anyone without regulation. This has led to an overflow of unverified information, creating confusion among users, including students. Teachers thus play a critical role in guiding students to identify authentic and authoritative sources. While digital education facilitates access to information, careful selection and filtering remain essential to preserve the authenticity of knowledge (Taher & Abu Bakar, 2022).

Furthermore, digital education challenges the Islamic concept of mutawatir, which refers to the transmission of knowledge by numerous trustworthy narrators whose credibility is beyond doubt. The openness of cyberspace has resulted in widespread dissemination of religious information without control, leading to information overload and confusion regarding authenticity. In this context, a clear and authoritative evaluation system is needed to assess the validity and accountability of information dissemination. Islam emphasizes discipline in the transmission of knowledge, requiring that all learning be sourced from verified references and qualified individuals (Taher & Abu Bakar, 2022).

Awi and Zulkifli (2021) highlighted that Islamic Education teachers face multiple commitments and responsibilities beyond their primary role as educators. In addition to teaching and learning (PdPc), they are tasked with managing various annual religious programs such as Islamic celebrations, motivational camps, Kem Bestari Solat, and Kem Cemerlang Jawi. These responsibilities pose significant challenges to incorporating creativity into PdPc based on PAK-21. Moreover, heavy teaching loads and official duties both within and outside school hours contribute to emotional stress among teachers (Othman & Omar, 2014).

This situation is further compounded by the fact that Islamic Education teachers are often appointed as key secretaries in school organizations, adding to their workload. Teachers who also serve as class teachers face even more complex responsibilities with additional tasks. Thus, it is evident that embedding creativity in PdPc requires strong commitment and continuous support from various stakeholders. Nevertheless, if these challenges are reframed as opportunities to strengthen creative and effective PdPc, Islamic Education teachers can overcome obstacles with resilience and motivation.

In conclusion, Islamic Education teachers must possess strong mental endurance and motivation to enhance teaching quality. They should collaborate in embedding creativity within PAK-21 while instilling noble values among students. Furthermore, sensitivity to contemporary changes and continuous efforts to improve professional skills are essential to ensure excellence in teaching and the holistic development of knowledgeable and morally upright individuals (Awi & Zulkifli, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

21st Century Learning (PAK-21) represents an educational approach that emphasizes higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), creativity, communication, collaboration, and the integration of technology in the teaching and learning (PdP) process. Within the context of Islamic Education, the implementation of PAK-21 by Islamic Education teachers (GPI) plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of PdP and in shaping students' character to achieve a balanced development across spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions.

The literature review indicates that the readiness of GPI to implement PAK-21 remains at a moderate level. According to Hamzah and Attan (2007), readiness encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers with strong pedagogical and technological literacy are better equipped to deliver effective and relevant PdP aligned with contemporary demands. However, Sabilan et al. (2022) found that teachers' readiness to implement hybrid learning based on technology was moderately low, highlighting persistent gaps in technological proficiency among GPI.

Moreover, one of the main challenges faced by GPI is the integration of technology into teaching and learning, particularly in practical topics such as worship (ibadah) and faith (aqidah). Lubis et al. (2017) noted that although these topics are more appropriately taught using textbooks, teachers must enhance their capacity to utilize information and communication technology (ICT) as instructional tools. This is essential, as shifts in educational culture and technological advancements demand that teachers remain

responsive and adaptable to stay relevant in the contemporary educational landscape (Hassan & Mohd Aris, 2009).

In addition, teachers' attitudes toward technology significantly influence the effectiveness of PdP. Mohd Nawi et al. (2020) reported that teachers' readiness to use multimedia platforms was weak, underscoring the need for continuous training and support. In this regard, GPI must adopt a more open mindset and be prepared to integrate technology into teaching and learning in line with the requirements of 21st century education. Technology should not be perceived as an innovation that contradicts Islamic principles; rather, it should be regarded as a tool to strengthen PdP and enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Education.

In conclusion, based on the literature review, the implementation of PAK-21 among GPI requires comprehensive support in terms of training, professional development, and attitudinal change toward educational innovation. With improved readiness in knowledge, skills, and attitudes, GPI have the potential to deliver teaching and learning that is more creative, effective, and relevant to the needs of contemporary students. Therefore, collaboration among schools, administrators, and educational agencies is essential in establishing an ecosystem that supports the pedagogical transformation of GPI toward a more progressive and impactful direction.

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